

# Death of a Parent or Caregiver

## The Loss of a Parent

You may already have experienced the death of someone you care about—a grandparent, a neighbor, or maybe a beloved pet. After this death, you probably felt sad and upset. Eventually your feelings got easier to handle, and you probably began to remember the good times you had with this loved one. In time, sadness lessened and more peaceful feelings took its place.

The death of a parent, however, is especially traumatic and is one of the most difficult things you can live through. You have a special relationship with your parent. A parent takes care of you, listens to your worries, lends a shoulder to cry on, and cheers your accomplishments. A parent's death will undoubtedly affect you differently than that of others you may have lost. The feelings are deeper and stronger and may seem overwhelming. As an adult, losing a parent is a sad experience. It is often even harder for a child or teenager.

### **Big and Little Changes**

The weeks and months following a parent's death are very difficult. If your parent died suddenly as a result of illness, or from a traumatic event like a natural disaster or war, you may feel sorry or even guilty that you did not have a chance to say goodbye. Your home may not feel the same without your mom or dad. And, you're right, things aren't the same. But change is a part of life. Whether the change is good or bad, it is almost always stressful because you have to adapt to a new situation. Dealing with change takes time.

The death of a parent can cause all kinds of permanent changes in a child's or teenager's life. This may be especially true if your parents don't live together. If you live with only one parent and that parent dies, you may wonder: Who will be there for me? Who will take care of me? But the important thing to remember is that whatever happens, you will be cared for.

### **Moving**

Some young people will have to move to a different apartment or house. For many families, the loss of a parent also means the loss of income. Your living parent may no longer be able to afford the existing mortgage or rent. A new home may even be in another city or state. This change may be particularly stressful because you will have to say good-bye to your old friends and neighbors. You'll have to make new friends and get used to a new place and a different school. It takes time to adjust and fit in.

### **Relatives and Foster Parents**

Sometimes children or teens may be sent to a relative's home to live for a while. A parent may need time alone to cope with his or her grief. He or she may also need time alone to get details, such as living arrangements and financial affairs, in order. Your parent may not be able to give you the care and attention you need and deserve while he or she is trying to work things out. Another relative may be in a better position to give you support, with both day-to-day living and emotions.

Other times, young people are sent to live permanently with relatives or foster parents. A foster parent offers to provide a home for and care for children who are not relatives. Moving into a foster home means adjusting to a new family. You have to adapt to your relatives or foster parents, their household, and their rules. You may also have to attend a new school, depending on where your relatives or foster family lives.

It's okay to feel scared if you have to move. You may not feel at home right away, but you may be able to ease your feelings by honestly communicating with your relatives or foster parents. They will become your caregivers. They will provide you not only with food and clothing but nurturing, guidance, and discipline. Being honest about your needs and your feelings is one way to help ensure that your move will go smoothly.

### **Additional Responsibilities**

Other young people will be able to stay in their homes after their parent dies. However, they may have to take on more responsibilities at home. They may have to babysit their younger siblings or cook dinner while their parent works. Some teenagers will need to get a part-time job to help out with expenses. When a parent dies, one less person is available to run a household and a family. Everyone has to pitch in and help.

Helping out with chores or finances can enable you to feel important to your family. This may ease the pain of grieving. But don't try to take over the role of a parent completely. That's too much of a responsibility to take on as a teenager.

# Grief and a Range of Emotions

Death is a fact of life. Unfortunately, sometimes people die before they reach old age. Losing a parent is painful and difficult. This is true whether your parent has died after a long illness or has died suddenly.

## Common Physical Reactions After a Death

After a parent or someone close to you dies, you might have some physical reactions. These reactions can include headaches, jaw and/or throat tightness, heart palpitations, numb or tingling sensations, dizziness, nausea or stomach pains, fatigue, cold and clammy hands, the need to urinate frequently, dry mouth, neck or shoulder pain, tightness in the chest, and sweating. If you aren't feeling well, don't keep the information to yourself. Although the feelings will diminish and go away over time, if you are concerned by how you are feeling, you should see a physician.

## Blaming Yourself

It's important to realize that the death is not your fault. Nothing you did or could have done would have prevented it. It was out of your control. Sometimes when you feel guilty, you need someone else to help you see the truth.

After a parent's death, some people turn their guilt into anger. They express their anger by getting into fights, hurting people, or damaging property. The best way to deal with this anger is to talk to someone. Talking about your feelings—whether guilt, anger, sadness, or whatever they may be—helps to overcome them.

## Voicing Your Feelings

Communication and talking about how you feel is incredibly important and is crucial to the healing process. Stuffing your feelings deep down won't make them go away. When you don't express your feelings, emotions seem overwhelming and hard to handle. The feelings will also return again and again. By talking to someone else, you help yourself face your painful and uncomfortable feelings and conquer them. Remember, you don't have to bear your grief alone. There are others who care about you and want to help you deal with your parent's death.

## Grief

The powerful emotions that you experience when a parent dies are called grief. Grief is intense emotional suffering that a traumatic event causes. Grief doesn't feel good—it hurts—but it is necessary. A person needs to grieve to be able to accept someone's death and to say good-bye to that person.

Grief can last a long time. But eventually it lessens and finally disappears. The sadness becomes bearable and easier to talk about. After your grief eases, you will once again remember the happy times you shared with your parent. You may never completely stop longing for your parent, but you will be able to go on with your life.

## **Stages of Grieving**

When people mourn a loved one, they go through what is known as the grieving process. This refers to the series of feelings people experience when they mourn. During these stages is immense sorrow and sadness. Some people go through all of the stages, but others do not. There is no fixed pattern for grieving, since everyone grieves in his or her own way. There is also no set time period to reach acceptance of a parent's death.

### **Shock**

When a parent dies, your initial reaction may be shock and confusion. You may feel numb and incapable of fully understanding what is going on. This numbness will lessen in time as the shock wears off. There will be waves of sorrow and sadness. This can hit you powerfully all at once, or it may gradually build in strength. But this is just the beginning of the journey through the grieving process.

### **Denial**

Some people go into denial after the death of a loved one. Denial is ignoring or suppressing one's true feelings and refusing to acknowledge the reality of the situation. People may not want to recognize that their parent is dead. It is too painful for them to admit that they won't ever see their parent again.

People use denial to escape from a painful event. You can use your imagination to pretend something has not really happened. A parent's death can make you feel as if you want to run away. In most cases you cannot really run somewhere else—and doing so wouldn't help anyway—so you escape inside yourself.

If you think you may be in denial, be patient with yourself. Eventually you will have to admit the truth and accept your parent's death. Try not to get frustrated wondering when your denial will end. Give yourself the time you need. It's not easy to let go of the special relationship you had with your parent.

### **Anger**

Sometimes people become angry when faced with death. For example, although you may know your parent did not intend to get sick, you may be angry that he or she left you. You may be

furious that your parent wasn't able to prevent his or her death from happening. If your parent died from an accident or a natural disaster, or while serving in the military, you may feel angry at the whole world. It's okay to be angry. Don't feel guilty about it. Feelings aren't right or wrong, they just are. Also, don't get upset with your brother or sister if he or she is angry with your parent for dying. Let your sibling express his or her feelings; it is part of the grieving process.

You may be angry simply at the fact that your parent has died. You may not know whom to blame. But blaming someone won't make your feelings go away. Examine what is underneath your anger. Often it's fear or sadness. Many people turn their hurt into anger. But working your way through denial and anger will put you more quickly on the path to accepting your parent's death.

### **Bargaining**

When a family member is dying, we might try to make a deal with ourselves or God to spare that person's life. For example, we might say something like, "If he makes it through this surgery, I'll try harder in school" or "If she gets better, I'll devote my life to helping others." Usually, we don't share these bargains with others. An extreme form of bargaining for the life of a loved one is saying something like, "Take me instead, and let her live."

These kinds of bargains are another reaction to our powerlessness against death. It is an attempt to gain some control over something we don't want to have happen. Though this type of bargaining is irrational, it is an important step in getting ready to say good-bye.

### **Depression**

Depression is when nothing seems worth doing. Symptoms of depression include feeling sad most of the time, withdrawing from others, feelings of worthlessness, not eating or sleeping normally, losing interest in activities you usually enjoy, and feeling slowed down physically. It is a normal stage of mourning and should not be ignored or rushed. However, if you find yourself heading deeper and deeper into depression, or if you feel that you've been depressed for too long, you should seek help. Talk to family members and/or seek counseling. Eventually, as your depression falls away, piece by piece, you will begin to resume the routines of daily life, and you will start to feel better.

### **Acceptance**

After you have come to terms with your loss, you will feel more like yourself again. You might have sad moments, but you'll be able to function more normally. Don't try to force yourself into this state of acceptance. Acceptance will come naturally, eventually. Time is the great healer.

When a dying person has accepted the possibility of his or her own death, he or she might wish to see fewer people, or even be alone. You should understand that this is a natural reaction to the situation. It does not mean that the dying person has rejected you or other family members.

## Four Tasks of Mourning

Another way to look at the grieving process is the “tasks” model. This process, which is similar to the emotional stages of grieving, is especially relevant as related to young people.

Many people, including Sigmund Freud, have said that grief is hard work. It is emotionally exhausting and physically draining. Along this line of thinking, psychologist William Worden outlined what he referred to as the four tasks of mourning in his book *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy* (originally published in 1982). These are four tasks that a grieving person must accomplish in order to promote his or her own healing.

**Accepting the Reality of the Loss:** The point at which the grieving person is no longer in denial about the death and is ready to acknowledge and face the reality that the person has died.

**Experiencing the Pain of Grief:** The grieving person no longer suppresses his or her feelings and allows him- or herself to feel the pain of grief. Experiencing and expressing grief rather than suppressing it is an important part of the healing process.

**Adjusting to a New Environment in Which the Deceased Is Missing:** The grieving person begins to adjust to the changes in his or her life. This may mean taking on new roles and responsibilities and facing the requirements of the new situation.

**Emotionally Relocating the Deceased Person and Moving On with Life:** The grieving person forms a new relationship with the memories of the deceased person. The grieving person must find a way to cope with the memories of his or her loved one in a way that allows him or her to go on with his or her life rather than holding on to the past.

## So Many Emotions

It is natural to feel a flood of emotions when a parent dies. Experiencing so many painful feelings at one time can be confusing. You may feel that the only way to go on is to believe that your parent is still alive. You know it's not true, but you act as if it were. This sort of denial is called a defense. It is a way of holding back the flood of emotions that you feel. Talking to people you trust about how you feel can help. If you don't want to talk to your parent, you could talk to a friend, therapist, teacher, coach, or guidance counselor. You may also want to talk to a religious advisor, such as a priest, pastor, or rabbi.

## Danger Signs

Grieving is a natural process, but it is painful and traumatic. At times, it will seem overwhelming. These feelings are normal and should lessen in time. However, if feelings such as depression or anger continue, that could be a sign you need help getting through the grieving process. Some signs that you or someone you know is not healing properly include the following:

- Thoughts of suicide
- Turning to drugs or alcohol
- Avoiding other people
- Feeling constantly angry or tired
- Feeling that life has no purpose
- Suddenly acting in ways that put one's life at risk, such as driving wildly, or taking up dangerous sports that were never of interest in the past
- Not caring how you look or dress
- Indifference to activities or hobbies you used to enjoy
- Looking or feeling sad and experiencing a prolonged depression

Should these signs develop in you or in others affected by death, it is time to seek professional counseling. There are support groups for young people in mourning as well as individual grief counselors to whom you can turn. Therapists and grief counselors, have special training and can help you sort out what you are feeling. Your school guidance counselor, family doctor, or local mental health organization can help you find these resources.

# When a Parent Lives Far Away

These days, living with one parent is very common. Many, many young people live with either their mom or dad. Some live with their grandparents or other relatives. That doesn't have to change the love you feel for the parent who doesn't live with you. And you will still feel a loss if this parent dies.

## When You Live Far Away From Your Parent

Sometimes a parent leaves home and moves hundreds of miles away. This is hard on children. They don't get to see that parent often. Maybe they see each other only at holidays, or during the summer. Or they get together just once or twice a year. Sometimes they cannot visit at all.

Even a child who didn't see his or her parent often feels angry and sad when that parent dies. He or she probably thought that someday they would spend more time together. The child is angry because that dream is taken away. Living apart from a parent doesn't make death less painful. The importance of a relationship is not based on whether your parent lives with you. There is more to it than that. The way you feel about the person is what's important. If what you remember is good, then you will probably be very sad.

When a child or teen loses a parent who lives far away, he or she grieves just like anyone else. Except sometimes it's harder. Your friends may not understand why you are so upset. Perhaps they never met your mom or dad. They don't know how strong your feelings are. Your grief is as painful as it would be if the parent lived with you. You have a right to feel sadness, no matter how far away your parent lived.

## When the Parent You Live With Dies

What happens to young people whose parents are divorced when the parent they are living with dies? Their remaining living parent may live hundreds of miles away in another state. He or she may have a new family. There is no single answer.

Some parents eagerly want their children to live with them and their new families. But many times this is not possible. In some cases, a state or local child care agency will get involved. You will be interviewed by a case worker. You may appear in front of a judge in family court. You are not there because you have done anything wrong. It's the judge's job to make sure that your new home is the best one for you.

Sometimes the best place to send you is to your grandparents or other close relatives. When this is not possible, you may be placed with foster parents.



# Serious Illness and Spending Time in the Hospital

Many teens are forced to deal with illness that has stricken a loved one. Taking care of a parent can be very difficult and stressful. You may feel as if you have to be cheerful all the time because you want to be positive around the sick person. But inside, you may be stressed out and upset because it's hard work and it hurts to see someone so helpless. When a sick person is in the hospital, you may feel frustrated because his or her well-being seems beyond your control. You may also think about what it would be like if that person died and regret all the things you ever did or said to him or her that weren't so great. It's normal to have feelings of guilt and fear.

If your parent is sick in a hospital, figuring out what to say is often hard. You may even feel that the person in the bed is different from your parent. Remember that he or she is the same person. The only difference is that he or she is sick. Try to talk the way you would if your parent wasn't in a hospital. If you usually talked about school, bring in some school work to show your mom or dad. If you both always like to talk about sports, talk about the latest games and team standings.

Sometimes other adults will tell you what to say in the hospital. They'll say, "Smile, don't let her see you upset. Don't upset her." These people mean well. But faking it could make matters worse. Be honest. Tell your parent how you feel. Parents want to know that they still matter to you. Tell your parent that you really need him or her. But try not to make your parent worry about you.

When your parent is in the hospital, he or she will worry about how life is at home. Your parent will want to know who is cooking for you, and who's helping you with your algebra homework. If you are the oldest child at home, much of the work will probably fall to you. You may resent the added chores. You may think that school work is enough to keep you busy. But illness in a family means that everyone has to help.

Extra chores and responsibilities may make you feel that life is unfair. These feelings are completely normal. Don't make things worse by getting angry at yourself for feeling this way. Accept your feelings. Let people close to you know how you feel. Talking about your feelings can make you feel better.

Many teens say that visiting their sick parents is very upsetting. They love their parents just as much as anyone else. But they find it very hard to visit in hospitals. It is helpful to understand that there are times when a person must put aside personal feelings so they can do something more important. Sometimes it is important to grant a dying person's wish or to do things you know will make a sick person happy. Most of the time it is enough to be there and to show support. Finding

the strength to put your discomfort aside is not easy. But making sacrifices for those who mean a lot to you is one responsibility of growing up.

## **Terminal Illness**

Cancer and some other diseases can be terminal. This means that they cause death. When people have an illness that can't be cured, they may stay in the hospital, go home, or go to live their last days in a hospice. A hospice is a place for people with terminal illnesses. If your parent needs medical attention, he or she must stay in the hospital. You may want your sick parent to come home. But this is not always possible.

A terminally ill parent may be able to come home to stay with the family. Even though your parent is dying, being home can make him or her feel better. Being in familiar surroundings, close to the people he or she loves, is comforting. But you will likely have more to do around the house. You may find it difficult to act like you did before your parent got sick. This happens to many people. Don't worry. What your parent needs most now is to be in a safe, familiar setting and to be near you, no matter how you act.

If your parent is in a hospice, you will be allowed to visit. Doctors, nurses, and counselors at a hospice are trained to work with patients who are dying. They try to make the dying person as comfortable as possible. They also work with the families. They are trained to help people deal with their feelings of grief and sadness.

No one, including the doctors, knows when a patient is going to die. Not knowing can be painful and confusing. There will be good days, when your sick parent seems to be recovering. In terminal cases the good days will not last. But your company can make the good days even better. You will be able to enjoy them with your parent.

Spending time with a terminally ill parent is difficult and scary. But when you look back on that time, you will be glad you did.

# The Funeral

Most cultures have rituals to acknowledge death. In our culture, that ritual is called a funeral. A funeral serves many purposes. For one thing, it can help you to overcome feelings of denial. If you are still running away inside and pretending your parent is still alive, the funeral helps you to accept the truth.

A funeral can also be comforting. It gives you a chance to mourn with family and friends who can help you to come to terms with your loss. Being together with other people who knew your mother or father enables you to share your sadness and remember all the good times you had with your parent.

## What Happens at a Funeral

Some funerals are held in churches. Other funerals are held at places called funeral homes. The funeral home director and the staff will help your family with the arrangements. Some funerals are small and quiet. Some funerals are attended by a lot of people, and there are many speakers. At a church funeral, sometimes there is music by a choir or an organist. If your parent was a veteran or an active member of the military, your family may choose to have a military funeral to honor your parent for his or her service to the country.

The box that holds the body is usually made of wood and is called the coffin. At the funeral, the coffin may be open or closed. Some people want the coffin open. They say it is a last chance to see the person. Others want the coffin closed. They say they want to remember the person as he or she looked when he or she was alive.

If the coffin is open, you will have to decide whether you want to see the body. Some people may try to discourage you. Others may encourage you. There is no right decision. Whether you see the body or not won't change how much you loved your parent when he or she was alive. Before you decide, think about how you will feel about seeing the body.

A religious leader such as a priest or a rabbi usually leads the funeral ceremony. This leader says prayers and words of comfort for the mourners. He or she also talks about your parent's life. Often, friends and relatives are also given a chance to speak. They might tell stories that show how much your parent was liked and respected. Someone may even tell a joke that shows your parent's sense of humor. The funeral gives people a chance to express what your parent's life and friendship meant to them.

You may decide that you wish to speak at the funeral. This is a decision you should reach with your living parent. If he or she agrees, then you will have a chance to say a few words. You can express how much your parent meant to you. This speech is called a eulogy. You should write down what you want to say. You might have a short story to tell that shows your parent's

understanding and love. But don't feel that you must speak at the funeral. You may be too sad to say anything. Your family and friends will understand that this is a painful and difficult time for you.

At the funeral, you may cry or you may not. You might feel like being alone or talking with others. You may also be surprised by the sad reactions of other family members and friends at the funeral. You may have never seen your father cry, or your mother break down. Crying is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of grieving. Their behavior may make you uncomfortable or scared. But remember, they are just expressing grief. People grieve differently since there is no single way to experience grief. Don't feel that you must help your grieving parent or relatives.

## **Attending Your Parent's Funeral**

Your living parent may decide that you shouldn't attend the funeral. She or he may think you are too young. Or he or she may think that the experience will be too painful for you. But if you wish to say good-bye to your parent with the rest of the family and friends, talk it over. Explain that you understand the purpose of a funeral. Say that you will feel left out and upset if you cannot go. After you've calmly told your parent about your feelings, plan to attend.

Or, you may decide that you don't want to attend the funeral. If you don't feel you can handle it, say so. Don't push yourself. Boys, especially, often get a hard time from the family if they say they don't want to attend. You have to make people understand how you feel.

Attending the funeral isn't a sign of how much you loved your parent. You may want to say good-bye in your own way. You may want to grieve in private. Hopefully, your family will understand if you don't want to go to the funeral.

## **After the Funeral Service**

After the funeral service, the body is usually taken to a cemetery for burial. Going to a cemetery is very hard. It can even be scary. But seeing the coffin put into the ground is another way to see how final the death is. And that memory will help you cope with your loss better in the time to come. Some people are placed in mausoleums, which are buildings where caskets are stored above ground. Spaces called vaults are cut in the walls for the coffins.

Some people leave instructions for their families, saying that want to be burned, or cremated. The remaining ashes are given to the family. Some people put the ashes in a vase called an urn and keep the ashes at home. Sometimes the ashes are spread over a place that had special meaning to the dead person.

Some people don't want to be buried. They write wills asking their family to give their body to medicine. Their body's organs are then used in transplants. A cornea transplant, for example, can give sight to a blind person. Some organs, like the heart or liver, can be taken from a dead

person to save the life of another who is sick or dying. People who donate their body to medicine say they do it because they want their last act of life to help others.

There are many different ideas about what happens to people after they die. Some believe that each person has a soul that even death can't destroy. Others believe that dead people continue to live through their children, that the children's lives are reflections of the lost parent. Many people feel that a dead person remains "alive" in the memories of those who knew him or her. Still other people say they don't know what happens after death. You may already have your own ideas about what happens after death. The question has no easy answers. You may find that over time you will come up with your own ideas.

# Moving Beyond Grief

Your parent's death will affect you for a long time. And the process of accepting that your parent is gone is often lengthy and difficult. It is important to give yourself time to grieve. Death is a part of life, but this fact is hard for many people to face. Be patient with yourself. There is no time limit on grieving.

## Learning to Accept Death

As time goes on, the fact that your parent died will slowly sink in. You will get used to your mother or father's not being there. This is called acceptance. Acceptance is often recognized as the final stage of grieving. It doesn't mean forgetting about your parent. Acceptance simply means that you are willing to believe your parent is dead.

Even after you have accepted your parent's death, your sadness may not lessen immediately. Your emotional pain won't automatically go away because of acceptance. It takes time to lessen. And even after you think it has gone, feelings such as anger, sadness, and despair can return without warning. After you have moved on with your life, you may still have bouts of intense sadness. The emotions may be triggered by memories, photographs, experiences, or simply something someone says that reminds you of your deceased parent. These sudden feelings are normal.

Acceptance also means realizing that some things are beyond our power to change. This can be a difficult lesson to learn. Almost 700 years ago, St. Francis said, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." Remembering this when you feel powerless or hopeless may help.

As you grieve, talk with someone about your feelings. A school counselor, an older relative, or a close friend can listen. You might want to talk to a grief counselor, who is specially trained to help those who are grieving. One-on-one counseling or a support group can help you sort out what you are feeling. Sometimes it helps to share your feelings with others who have experienced or are experiencing the same thing. Talking about your feelings helps you look at them realistically. They often don't seem so gigantic or overwhelming when you share them with someone.

## Your Life Isn't Over

You have to continue living your life, even after your parent's death. Keep yourself busy with normal activities. If you're on a team, continue playing. See friends. Go to school and club meetings. Continue to do the things you did before your parent died.

If you don't think you are ready to resume normal activities yet, try devoting time to a project that honors the memory of your father or mother. Write your feelings and memories in a journal. Draw

a picture or make a collage of photographs of your parent. Even the singer Madonna needed to express her feelings about the death of her mother. She wrote the song "Promise to Try" to honor her mother's memory and to give herself strength to go on with her life. There are many ways to keep your parent's memory alive.

You also may want to concentrate on thinking about your future. You may still be grieving, but your parent would have wanted you to live your life to the fullest. Your parent would have wanted you to lead a happy and healthy life. Think about the wonderful things that lie ahead for you. Your parent will be with you in spirit in the years to come.

# Ten Questions to Ask If You Need Help

1. If I don't want to talk to a friend or family member about my parent's death, whom can I talk to?
2. What should I do if I am too scared to go visit my parent in the hospital?
3. Do I have to tell everyone at school what happened to my parent? Can I ask someone else to do that for me?
4. Do I have to speak at the funeral? Will my family understand if I choose not to?
5. What happens if I miss a lot of school?
6. How is my parent's death going to affect my family's future?
7. Do other people have to know if I want to talk to my school's counselor?
8. If I want to meet with a therapist, how do I get information? How do I find one?
9. Would a support group help me? How can I find one?
10. If I see a therapist or join a support group, what can I expect from the experience?



# Myths and Facts About Grieving

**Myth:** People go through the grieving process in the same way and at the same pace.

**Fact:** Although there are similarities in the grieving process, everyone goes through them in his or her own way. There is no standard time to complete the process. It can take days, weeks, months, or even years to grieve.

**Myth:** It is normal to cry at a funeral.

**Fact:** Although many people cry at funerals, many do not. That does not mean that a person didn't love the person who has died. It is important that a person cry and grieve at his or her own pace.

**Myth:** It is important to control your feelings when you experience a loss.

**Fact:** Ignoring or overcontrolling your feelings will only make things harder in the long run. It is important to let yourself feel sadness, anger, frustration, fear, and any other emotions you are feeling. It is important to talk and let your feelings out. It is an important part of the grieving process. Only then can you start to heal.

**Myth:** The faster you get over a loss, the better off you will be.

**Fact:** It is important to take your time through the grieving process. Don't rush things. Mourning is a natural process, and you must go through the process at your own pace.

**Myth:** If you see a grief counselor or therapist, people will think you are mentally ill.

**Fact:** Many people see therapists for a variety of reasons. Sometimes, things are too overwhelming to handle on your own and you need help sorting out feelings and coping with such a loss. If anything, it takes strength to reach out for help. Many people will admire you for that. You don't have to tell your friends you go to a counselor or therapist, unless you wish. And you don't have to tell anyone (even a parent) what you talk about in counseling, unless you wish. It's up to you.

**Myth:** It is wrong to say negative things about someone who has died.

**Fact:** It is important to communicate and share your memories, both good and bad. This will help you heal.

**Myth:** It is very rare for someone to lose a parent before the age of eighteen.

**Fact:** In the United States, over two million people will experience the death of a parent before the age of eighteen.

# How to Help a Friend

If a friend loses a parent, he or she will need your support and love during this difficult time. As a friend, the best thing you can do is listen. Make it easy for your friend to talk about the death of a parent. Go to a place where it's quiet. Avoid noisy places, like malls and school yards. Peaceful places, such as a park or basement, are good choices.

Listening doesn't mean having the right words to say. There are no right words. It does mean letting your friend do the talking. Don't force your friend to talk about a parent's death. But tell him or her that you would be happy to listen if he or she wants to talk about it. Your friend may say things that don't make sense. If so, don't correct her. She is grieving and needs your patience and understanding.

## Helping a Friend Get Help

There are times when a friend can save a life. Watch out for danger signals. If your friend says he wants to join the lost parent in heaven, immediately tell his living parent. Your friend may be threatening suicide. Don't take it as a joke. Taking it seriously could save your friend's life.

A friend may try to get you to promise not to tell anyone how he feels. But this is a promise that you should not keep. Your friend is so upset that he may feel that his own life is worthless. Your friend is wrong. At dark moments, some people are overcome by grief. They can't see the value of their own lives. As a friend, you can tell someone how much he or she means to you. But that may not be enough. Don't ignore your friend's feelings. Tell someone. The best person to tell is the living parent. If for some reason that isn't possible, tell a pastor, priest, rabbi, or school official. Don't keep it to yourself.

Your best efforts to help may not be enough. Your friend may need to get help from adults whose job it is to help people in pain. Counselors receive special training at helping others grieve. They feel comfortable talking about death. They see it as a natural part of life. Many hospitals and hospices employ grief counselors. A grief counselor understands the stages of grief that a person goes through. Pastors, priests, and rabbis have also been trained at helping people grieve.

Remember, the best help you can give is to make your friend understand that she is not alone. Let her know that you care, and so do her other friends and family. At first your friend may not believe you. In time she will see that you are telling the truth. Your support, and time, will help the pain become bearable.

## Casey's Story

I never realized how precious life is until one day it really hit me. It can take a while to sink in, but it really hurts the most when you realize someone's gone. Losing my dad recently helped me realize it. He died only at the age of 51. That was young but he wouldn't have wanted to stay in a hospital with lots of doctors helping him. We were hoping for a miracle but one wouldn't come our way. Now we all realize how precious it is.

I always have enjoyed waiting after school for my dad to come get me from school. It was the one thing I looked forward to every day. We had so much fun in our ten minute ride, from talking to singing! Dad would sing in the funniest way possible just to see me smile. But one day as soon as I got out of class I called dad on my phone. No answer. I called him back a few minutes later, thinking he might just have been working on the farm. Still no answer. I called him quite a few more times, so I called my mom. She said, "Try one more time and if he doesn't answer, call grandma." I tried again. No answer from dad. I called mom back and told I had no answer, so I called grandma and she got me from school. When we got to my house, dad's truck was in the driveway, so I thought maybe he was just taking a nap. But when I got in to look for dad, he wasn't on the couch and he wasn't downstairs in the basement. I went back upstairs and saw him lying face up on the bathroom floor.

That is when I had the instinct to call mom back and tell her. I told her, "Dad is lying on the floor surrounded by throw up and he won't respond to me." Mom said, "Hang up and call 911 now! I'm just getting off the interstate!" I did as I was told and called 911. I was in so much shock! That was when mom got home. The first responders and town police officer shortly followed. About ten minutes later the county ambulance got to our house. That is when they told us to get on the road and get to the hospital and they will meet us there.

Once we got to the hospital and were in the tiny waiting room, my mom, grandma, grandpa, and I were waiting for them to bring dad into the emergency room. They still couldn't get dad to respond on the way to the hospital. Mom and I got to see him for a few minutes and then they told us he had to go back for a CAT scan. Just a little while later they got the scans back on the computer and that is when the doctor came back with the news. She told that he had a brain bleed and there was a lot of swelling. Mom and I were in shock! Mom said it was almost as hard as losing my older brother. Not long after the news, my sister and the rest of my family got there, and we told them what had happened.

Shortly after we were moved up to the adult ICU, there was a special room we got to stay in. After we got moved up there, the social worker talked to my mom and sister. I just couldn't get myself to go in the room and talk to her. Then I had to go in because they asked me if I would be comfortable talking to Child Life. I told them yes and they had my sister and I go into the room

next to ours. Then they explained everything to me in much calmer terms so it made much more sense. They let us pick out a blanket to lie on dad while we were there. We also got a handprint in special clay, and I got dad's and my handprint to take with me to my ball games now. All of that was just super comforting to my sister and I. After one day I still couldn't get myself to go back and see dad. It was hard on me especially because I was the one that had found him at home. About 11:30 on Friday night after about an hour of crying I went in and saw dad. He didn't look any different. He looked like dad with a tube on his face, that's all it was. I wrote dad a nice letter and colored him a picture. It was of a kitty. It looked like my kitty at home that laid on dad's feet when he was asleep.

After about five to six days in the ICU they moved us to a different part of the hospital because we had admitted dad into hospice care. So they moved us to Younker 7. About an hour after we left ICU, a couple of friends came and visited me. I got to finally leave the hospital and see the outside world a little. After I went home I went straight to bed. I was so thankful to sleep in my own bed. My mom called around 4:30 in the morning on February 15, 2012. She called to tell my sister and I dad had passed away.

We then had to start planning for visitation and funeral. That was very tough process on mom, my sister, and I. But we got through it. We had visitation on February 19th and the funeral was on February 20th. There were a lot of people at both the funeral and visitation. But we know that many people were friends of dad's and many people knew and respected him. The funeral was the toughest part. We just wanted him back so much, but nothing could change.

So his life was in the hands of time after the accident. He meant a lot to everyone, even those who hardly knew him. He was a part of everyone, especially my sister, mom, and I. He has a special place in my heart. He will never be forgotten and he had a short life. Now think about this: do you really know how precious life is?

—Casey

[Share your own story here.](#) Sharing stories is a powerful way to connect with other people. Be part of the Teen Health & Wellness Personal Story Project--like Casey did above--and share your story about building leadership skills and confidence.

# Ben's Story

Every event in our lives contributes to who we are as individuals. Because of this, we are new and different every day. That being said, it is the large events in our lives that have the greatest impact on how we interact with the world. For me, the three objects that represent the most important things in my life are my snowboarding goggles, my drumsticks, and a rock from my father's grave. The goggles represent my connection to nature. The drumsticks represent my love for music and creativity. Lastly, the rock is an object that is from the single most influential moment of my life.

I have always loved the winter. It is by far my favorite season. The feeling you get when you enter a warm house when it is cold outside is, in my opinion, the greatest feeling ever. You just can't get that kind of comfort in the summer. I also love the outdoors, and for me, snowboarding is the best way to be outdoors in the winter. It gets me off the couch and out the door on otherwise uneventful days. When on the slopes, I enjoy speeding down the steeper runs. When doing so, I feel a sense of freedom. During this time, I forget all of my troubles. Snowboarding has also been a way to meet new people. Because of it, I have made many friends inside and outside of my high school. Also, snowboarding represents my connection to nature. Through it, I see what I believe to be nature at its best. Quiet, calm, and serene are how I envision the perfect day and the perfect run. Also, snowboarding, for me at least, is a way to connect to my inner child. The joy that it brings me is the closest thing to that feeling of sheer happiness that you only experience as a child. You could say that snowboarding is one of the best things to happen to me.

Music has been a major part of my life for as long as I can remember. The first instrument I picked up was the trumpet. This was dropped soon after I got my braces. The next thing I started to play was the drums. This was a welcome change because no more would I have to deal with the pain of bleeding lips every day. In addition to that, I had always wanted to play the drums. Even on the first day I was in band, I thought that the drums looked so cool and so fun. This change proved to be wonderful. I fell in love with the drum set in particular. The beats that I bang out on my beautiful, shiny, sexy, red drum set are sometimes the only thing that keeps me sane. When I get into a groove, I let my inner animal out. This is a great way for me to release anger and frustration. Sometimes, my rhythms can go on for hours at a time. I space out and let the world go, completely consumed by the vibrations coming out of my drums. Even though my drum set is an outlet for anger, it also has more meaning than that. For me, it is a way to keep my mind active. Through it, I experience the world in a whole new way. Now that I have been playing the drums for four years, I have a better understanding of who I am. Because of this newly found understanding of the person that I am, I have become a better human being.

My last object is a rock from my father's grave. My dad died on August 21, 2006. His death was a complete shock to everyone who knew him. Needless to say, my dad's death made me take a look at life in a whole new way. Because of this experience, I have matured quite a bit in a short amount of time. I now have a greater understanding of the fragility of life. Because of this, I have learned that you need to let the people whom you care about know what they mean to you. I also have learned that there is no point in being depressed when some little thing happens to you. Life goes on, and there is no point in being left behind. This does not mean that you can't feel sorrow, but rather that you can't let the sad things consume you. This tragic time in my life also created strong bonds between my otherwise distant families. Through this experience, we learned that we are too weak to stand alone. The rock represents a time in my life that I will never forget. It represents all the hard things that I have been through and how I have overcome every single one of them. It represents all the times that I have learned and adapted to a new way of life. It represents family and the comfort that it can bring. But most important, it represents how important it is to treasure life and every day that you have on this planet.

Our lives are ever changing. Every day when you wake up, you are different from the person you were when you went to bed. Both the little and the large events in our lives shape our personalities. Every moment we grow, adapt, and learn. Though this may not be noticeable in the short term, it is easy to see after just a matter of weeks. The exceptions to this being the larger events in our lives. These can change and tear the fabric of our lives in just moments. All of these things can be represented by some object. As previously stated, the objects that represent the big events and things in my life are my snowboarding goggles, my drumsticks, and a rock from my father's grave. The goggles represent my connection to nature and my inner child. The drumsticks are my animalistic side and my creative capacity. The rock is all the hard things that have happened in my life, how I have learned and have become stronger from them, and how important it is to see the value in life. These objects represent things that I will never forget. They represent things that I will always keep with me. They represent the things that have changed me the most. So in the end, we are the product of everything that life has thrown at us.

—Ben

[Share your own story here.](#) Sharing stories is a powerful way to connect with other people. Be part of the Teen Health & Wellness Personal Story Project--like Ben did above--and share your story about successfully dealing with or overcoming a challenge.

# Hannah's Story

I was 2 and a half when I get separated from my mother and my grandmother and her husband adopted me. My mom and dad had the choice if they still wanted to see me and help support me while I was growing up. My mom chose to run off and do drugs unlike my father. He got sober and helped grandma and grandpa support me.

It was fun living with grandma and grandpa. They always had good food. But one day my grandma sent me off with my aunt for some odd reason. When we got back to the house, there was an ambulance. I didn't know what was going on. I ran into the house and saw grandma. She was fine. I ran up to her and said "where's grandpa?" She said "he's with the angels now." He was dying because of old age, and I understand that, it's just a part of life and it's going to happen sooner or later.

Two years had passed and everything was going great, until on March 9th, my grandma came running in the house screaming. I will never forget the blood-curdling scream that echoed through the house that morning. I ran to her and asked her what was going on. She said she just got a phone call saying that her daughter, my aunt, had overdosed and has died. I was devastated. I didn't understand why this was happening to me. I just didn't...

One year later, I'm staying the night with my dad. We stayed up a little later than usual that night because we were watching a football game that night. After the game we all went to sleep. It was about 8:00 o'clock in the morning when I heard something hit the ground. I didn't think anything of it, I just had thought that my dad had dropped something, so I just go back to sleep. A couple of minutes later I hear it again, but this time, there was screaming. I ran back to where my dad was, and he was lying on the ground. He was having a heart attack. His girlfriend told me to go to the neighbor's house and get help, so I run out of the house to next door. I bang on the door and these two girls answer that looked to be 15, I told them to call for help. They pulled me inside and I told them what was going on. 10 minutes later my grandma showed up and took me to the hospital that he had been taken to. He died. Just at the age of 45, my father died of a heart attack.

Why does it have to be me? Why do I have to have all of these deaths in my family? I'm only 12, why me? I went through so much depression. I had to go to counseling for a while. That didn't help. A year passed and things were getting better, thank God. It goes to show that you can get over any obstacle, no matter how big or small. There is always someone there by your side. You're never alone.

—Hannah

[Share your own story here.](#) Sharing stories is a powerful way to connect with other people. Be part of the Teen Health & Wellness Personal Story Project—like Hannah did above—and share your story about successfully dealing with or overcoming a challenge.



# Jaquetta's Story

When one thinks of a problem concerning teens, it is usually somewhere along the lines of “child’s play,” or a situation that is significantly over dramatized. These scenarios include: relationship problems, bullying, body image issues, peer-pressure and drugs. It is an outrage that as teens, our situations are merely pushed to the side and not referenced as important by “grown-ups” who face “real” problems like financial trouble and stress. Newsflash, adults are not the only ones whose problems create long-term pain and suffering. As teens we have often heard the line “been there, done that” by many of our older relatives who strive to ensure us our problems are not as difficult as they may seem, but they don't understand. Not everyone can handle the same amount of pain or suffering. We may be teens who do encounter petty situations like misplacing our favorite sweater or breaking a nail, but we are victims as well. Victims of unbearable amounts of pain, grief and heartbreak. These internal struggles are struggles that cannot be explained through basic communication, so we try to express them through music, writing, art and in the most unfortunate cases, suicide notes. It's time someone listened.

Contradictory to my adolescence, I have not encountered many of the stereotypical disturbances associated with being young, wild and free. I've had my heart broken but not by a significant other. I've had body image issues but as of now they are in the past and the least of my worries. What I am here to discuss is the unbearable debt that death has on not only adults but adolescents as well. Yes, I am here to discuss one of life's most unfortunate series of events. It is a topic no one likes to talk about, but to help someone who desperately needs guidance I will take my chances.

At the age of five a child should be happy and full of life, looking forward to every adventure that lies just around the corner. I was all of these things, and a bit more. Despite my strenuous family situation with my mother and father being separated, I found means to be happy. My mother's home was where I spent most of my time but my father's house was my fortress. It was where I found various things to do in nature. I would take walks and play in his dirt filled yard. Those days were the best days of my childhood. Those days tragically came to an end when my father passed away. He wasn't sick or anything but he was an alcoholic and despite the negative connotation directed towards alcoholic parents, my father was a great man. He never drank around me and my older brother, or maybe he did and I wasn't aware. Those brown paper bags were a mystery then.

After the passing of my father, everything went downhill and even now as I strive to rid myself of my horrible past, I find myself rigid with anger. This anger is directed towards no one in particular but it affects everyone. After my father passed away, my mother began to struggle emotionally and financially. She was already suffering because not long before the loss of my father was the

loss of my grandmother, whose health had been rapidly deteriorating. I felt lost and unmistakably alone. I went into a state of pure hatred as I became older, tearing my father's picture off of my wall and cursing him for leaving me to face the inevitable alone. My mother didn't understand my anger. She thought it wasn't the typical reaction to the loss of a parent being it was completely opposite to her reaction of losing her mother. I couldn't explain it either. I was always daddy's little girl, but how can you be daddy's little girl without daddy?

Soon I would go on a journey of enlightenment. After the self diagnosed depression and constant negativity, I began to realize the power I had within myself. Initially believing that being without my father was a downfall, I began to redirect this idea with the realization of the independence I was forced to obtain due to the fact that he wasn't there. As a young person I was able to promptly make appropriate decisions, because I wanted to make my father proud and his death not in vain. Therefore, I became this individual who was forced to gain specific knowledge and teach myself the ways of the world so that I may grow into a being of respect.

I generally refer to myself as the one that got away because, when people think of a young girl growing up without a father figure they think of someone who is promiscuous and easily apprehended, being her father is not there to promptly explain the birds and the bees. Sure a mother is there, but it is never the same with one part missing. I am proof that this stereotype is exactly that, a stereotype. I became a person who decided to share her story in an attempt to help others with the unbearable debt of a missing parent.

It isn't the end. You don't have to be angry or view yourself as someone who is less fortunate. Take your experience and use it as fuel for your fire. Share your story so that others may know it is possible to live and live happily with a deceased parent. Follow every dream you've ever had, knowing that the parent you have lost will be proud. In turn, express gratitude for the parent that is still there. Let them be your shoulder to lean on, tell them how you feel and share your pain. Remember the good times and you will laugh together and together you will know that the death of your loved one was not in vain. My mother is standing over my shoulder, smiling as I type these last words.

—Jaquetta

[Share your own story here.](#) Sharing stories is a powerful way to connect with other people. Be part of the Teen Health & Wellness Personal Story Project—like Jaquetta did above—and share your story about successfully dealing with or overcoming a challenge.

## John's Story

At 10 years old, a week after Thanksgiving 2013, my dad died. The day before, he was going delusional, saying all kinds of weird things. He had been sick with diabetes and he lost vision in his left eye. He died in the hospital because his heart kept getting bigger and bigger—it blew up inside of him. Two months after he died, my mom started dating a close friend to give her support.

His name was Mike. He was my half-step dad. He was nice at first, then he turned me into a hard tough kid instead of a softy. I started to get cool things, but he smoked. He tried to stop but he turned mean. We started to fight and everything was blamed on me. Plus I had to do all the work in the house, but this helped me start to overcome my dad's death. The government started to take money away from my mom in Social Security checks and we couldn't even afford food until Mike started to get food stamps when his job cut him off the job, and he couldn't find one. Then people at my mom's work started to take money away from her.

A couple of years after my dad's death, our cousin was getting married in Tennessee, so my sister and I went up there to go. My uncle Tim had to take me to my sister's house so me and he could go together. After the wedding, my uncle said that he wouldn't take me home like he was supposed to because he could dump my dad's ashes on his Farm, so I said no. Because they took all of his stuff from me, and they're not taking any more. From this I learned about myself—that I am protective over my dad, and I am stronger than I think I am. This is what I had to overcome.

—John

[Share your own story here.](#) Sharing stories is a powerful way to connect with other people. Be part of the Teen Health & Wellness Personal Story Project—like John did above—and share your story about successfully dealing with or overcoming a challenge.

# Resources

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

120 Wall Street, 22nd Floor

New York, NY 10005

(888) 333-AFSP (2377)

[www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

This organization is dedicated to the prevention and understanding of suicide. Its Web site offers information on suicide and coping help for those who have lost a friend or loved one. Information on finding a support group is also available.

Bereaved Families of Ontario

416-440-0290

[www.bereavedfamilies.net/](http://www.bereavedfamilies.net/)

Comfort Zone Camp

2101-A Westmoreland Street

Richmond, VA 23230

(866) 488-5679 or (804) 377-3430

[www.ComfortZoneCamp.org](http://www.ComfortZoneCamp.org)

Camps for seven- to seventeen-year-olds from across the country who have experienced the death of a close loved one. The camps are free and held primarily in Richmond, Virginia, with a satellite program in the New York/New Jersey area.

Distress Centres of Toronto

P.O. Box 243, Adelaide P.O.

Toronto, ON M5C 2J4

Canada

(416) 598-0166

[www.torontodistresscentre.com](http://www.torontodistresscentre.com)

This organization offers 24 hr telephone support and crisis intervention, along with suicide prevention programs and grief support. There are many Distress Centres in different parts of Canada.

The Dougy Center for Grieving Children & Families

P.O. Box 86852

Portland, OR 97286

(866) 775-5683 or (503) 775-5683

[www.dougy.org](http://www.dougy.org)

The Dougy Center's mission is to provide support in a safe place where grieving children, teens, and their families can share their experiences as they move through their grief process.

The Flaum Souksamlane In Loving Memory Foundation (ILMF)

4081 DeZavala Road, Suite 101

San Antonio, TX 78249

(888) 456-7555 or (210) 587-3953

[www.inlovingmemoryfoundation.org/](http://www.inlovingmemoryfoundation.org/)

ILMF is a national nonprofit organization committed to the well-being of children under the age of eighteen who have experienced the death of one or both of their parents.

Groww: Grief Recovery Online

11877 Douglas Road #102-PMB101

Alpharetta, GA 30005

[www.groww.org](http://www.groww.org)

This site offers message boards, chat rooms, and resource listings for people who have lost a loved one.

A Little HOPE

360 East 72nd Street, Suite C2300

New York, NY 10021

(646) 278-6736

[www.alittlehope.org](http://www.alittlehope.org)

This foundation's mission is to help provide grief counseling and bereavement support services to children and teens who have experienced the loss of a parent or loved one.

MedlinePlus: Trusted Health Information for You

[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/bereavement.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/bereavement.html)

A service of the U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health, this site offers a directory of articles, press releases, and fact sheets on bereavement and loss.

National Mental Health Association (NMHA)

2000 N. Beauregard Street, 6th Floor

Alexandria, VA 22311

(800) 969-NMHA (6642)

[www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org)

The NMHA is the oldest nonprofit mental health organization in the United States. Its focus is on education, advocacy, and research in all types of mental health and illness. Its resource center offers information and referrals.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

(800) 273-TALK (8255)

This national 24-hour hotline offers immediate assistance to people in crisis.

Rainbows Canada

80 Bradford Street, Suite 514

Barrie, ON L4N 6S7

Canada

(877) 403-2733

[www.rainbows.ca/default.aspx](http://www.rainbows.ca/default.aspx)

Rainbows Canada is an international not-for-profit organization that fosters emotional healing among children grieving a loss from a life-altering crisis. These losses, among others, include separation, divorce, death, incarceration and foster care.

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)

910 17th Street, NW Suite 800


Washington, DC 20006

(800) 959-TAPS (8277)

[www.taps.org](http://www.taps.org)


The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, Inc., is a one of a kind non-profit Veteran Service Organization offering hope, healing, comfort and care to thousands of American armed forces families facing the death of a loved one each year.

# For Further Reading

If you want more information on the topic, you can use the resources listed below. Works of fiction are indicated by the symbol .

Alexander, Kwame. *Rebound*. New York, NY: HMH Books for Young Readers, 2018. 

Alexander, Kwame. *The Crossover*. New York, NY: HMH Books for Young Readers, 2014. 


Andrews, Jan. *The Silent Summer of Kyle McGinley*. Winnipeg: Great Plains Teen Fiction, 2013. 

Biegel, Gina M. *The Stress Reduction Workbook for Teens: Mindfulness Skills to Help You Deal with Stress* (Instant Help Solutions). Oakland, CA: Instant Help Books, 2010.


Easton, Kelly. *Aftershock*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2006. 

Hinton, S. E. *The Outsiders*. New York, NY: Viking Press, 1967. 

Hughes, Lynne. *You Are Not Alone: Teens Talk About Life After the Loss of a Parent*. New York, NY: Scholastic, 2005.

Les Becquets, Diane. *The Stones of Mourning Creek*. Delray Beach, FL: Winslow Press, 2001. 

Lynch, JanetNichols. *Messed Up*. New York, NY: Holiday House, 2009. 


Matson, Morgan. *Second Chance Summer*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster/Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2012. 

Maynard, Joyce. *The Cloud Chamber*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books, 2005. 


Palmer, Libbi. *The PTSD Workbook for Teens: Simple, Effective Skills for Healing Trauma*. Oakland, CA: Instant Help Books, 2012.

Reynolds, Jason. *The Boy in the Black Suit*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2015. 

Schab, Lisa. *The Anxiety Workbook for Teens: Activities to Help You Deal with Anxiety and Worry*. Oakland, CA: Instant Help Books, 2008.

Sloan, Holly Goldberg. *Counting by 7s*. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2013. 


Soynes, Sonya. *One of Those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies*. New York, NY: Simon Pulse, 2005. 

Stone, MiriamR. *At the End of Words: A Daughter's Memoirs*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2003. 

Turner, Ann. *Hard Hit*. New York, NY: Scholastic Press, 2006. 

Van Dijk, Sheri. *Don't Let Your Emotions Run Your Life for Teens: Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills for Helping You Manage Mood Swings, Control Angry Outbursts, and Get Along with Others*. Oakland, CA: Instant Help Books, 2011.

Vincent, Erin. *Grief Girl: My True Story*. New York, NY: Bantam Dell Publishing, 2007.

Walker, Pamela. *Pray Hard*. New York, NY: Scholastic Press, 2001. 

Wallbank, Susan. *Facing Grief: Bereavement and the Young Adult*, revised ed. Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth Press, 2003.



# Glossary

**acceptance** The stage of processing loss when you have accepted that the loss has happened and you are ready to move on.

**anger** Strong feelings of displeasure and hostility.

**bargaining** The stage of dealing with loss when you try to make deals to get out of your unpleasant and painful situation.

**coffin** A box usually made of wood, in which a body is buried. Also called a casket.

**cremate** To change a body to ashes by burning. The ashes are often kept in an urn or a small jar.

**defense** Something you use to hold back a flood of feelings.

**denial** Blocking true feelings or denying reality.

**depression** Constant feeling of sadness.

**eulogy** A speech given at a funeral.

**foster care** Care of children by people who are not parents or relatives.

**funeral** A memorial service before the burial of someone who has died.

**grief** Intense sadness and sorrow felt after a trauma.

**grief counselor** A person trained to help others deal with sorrow.

**hospice** A place where dying people receive special care and support.

**mausoleum** A building where coffins are stored.

**mourning** The way grief is shown; grieving.

**suicide** The act of killing yourself.

**terminal disease** Illness that ends in death.

**urn** Container that holds the ashes of a person who has been cremated.

# Citations

## **Article Citation in MLA (Modern Language Association) Eighth Edition format:**

"Death of a Parent or Caregiver." *Teen Health and Wellness*, Rosen Publishing Group, Inc., August 2018, [teenhealthandwellness.com/article/116/death-of-a-parent-or-caregiver](https://teenhealthandwellness.com/article/116/death-of-a-parent-or-caregiver). Accessed 11 Feb. 2019.

## **Article Citation in APA (American Psychological Association) format:**

Death of a Parent or Caregiver. (n.d.). Retrieved February 11, 2019, from <https://teenhealthandwellness.com/article/116/death-of-a-parent-or-caregiver>

## **Article Citation in Chicago Manual of Style (16th edition) format:**

"Death of a Parent or Caregiver." *Teen Health and Wellness*, Rosen Publishing Group, Inc. August 2018. Accessed February 11, 2019. <https://teenhealthandwellness.com/article/116/death-of-a-parent-or-caregiver>.

Reviewed by: [Linda Woods, MA, LPC](#)

Updated: August 2018

*Since Web content is constantly changing, the Rosen Publishing Group recommends that young adults and children check with their parents or teachers before visiting any linked Web sites. The Rosen Publishing Group is not responsible for the content of linked Web sites or the conduct of Web site providers who offer electronic texts that infringe on the legal right of copyright holders.*