



goodwords

news from the **good grief center for bereavement support**

Grief Goes to School too!

We get many calls at GGC from parents and educators about how to best support children and adolescents who are grieving. As with adults, it is a unique experience for each individual child. Below are some commonalities that may be helpful to understand.

Infants and Toddlers While not in school yet, many families also have younger children at home. Infants and toddlers do not have an understanding of the concept of death, but do have an awareness that something is wrong. They can sense when there is a disruption in their normal routine, that the family emotion has changed, or that a loved one is absent.

This age group has more of a sense than an understanding that their loved one is gone. They may emotionally long for their loved one, and miss the sounds, smell and sight of that person. Possible grief reactions of this group may be crying, difficult to feed, change in sleep patterns, clinginess and having difficulty toileting.

Cuddling, reassurance, maintaining consistency in routines, and reaching out in a gentle and patient manner will help these young ones most.

Preschoolers Preschoolers (approximately 3-5 years old) view death as reversible, not yet understanding its permanency. This age group also tends to “magically think” that they caused the death.

Children within this group may ask questions repeatedly and may become anxious that their basic needs will not be met. They may feel abandoned by the loved one who has died and may have concerns over who will care

for them if it was a parent or caregiver who died. They may express emotions of fear, sadness, anger, worry, or confusion, and also may regress back to a time when they felt safer such as cuddling more often or thumb sucking.

Listen and answer their questions. Answer in simple and honest terms. Reassure the child that they will be well cared for and kept safe. Allow them to express whatever emotions they are feeling and let them know that it is okay to do so. Let them know that you are sad too and that it is okay to cry, feel angry, or be upset.

Early Elementary School Early elementary school children (approximately 6 – 9 years old) will start to understand that death is final and start to identify circumstances such as plane crashes or war that can cause death. Death is not perceived as something that will happen to them or a family member, only to others. It is hard for this age group to distinguish the difference between what they see on television and what may happen in their own lives.

Children of this age may also display regressive behaviors, withdraw, have sleep disturbances, difficulty concentrating or aggressively act out. Emotionally they may experience sadness, anger, guilt, fear and confusion.

Supporting this age group can be done by encouraging them to draw, read books, and play. Reading aloud



Grief Goes to School too!

(continued from front cover)

can be comforting as well as helpful. Many helpful books for all age groups may be found in GGC's lending library.

Middle School Middle school children (approximately 10-13 years old) are able to understand death as final. A variety of feelings and emotions will be felt and possibly heightened with the onset of puberty.

The child is now more aware of death and that it may happen again. They may think about their personal future milestones and how that will be for them without their loved one. They may exhibit mood swings, a change in school grades, withdrawing, or acting out.

Offer comfort and encourage the expression of emotions through talking with peers, listening to or writing music, creative writing, art expression, or sports. Make yourself available to have conversations and give out hugs freely.

High School High school teens (approximately 14-18 years old) can fully grasp the meaning of death. Depending on the individual they may reach out to friends more than family for support and comfort. They may also act out in ways never seen before or they may withdraw and keep to themselves.

Adolescents can be self-conscious about being different from their peers due to grief which may have them acting as if nothing has changed when they are around their friends. They will need the safe cocoon of home when away from their friends.

Emotions will range from shock, sadness, anger, fear, confusion, and guilt. Acting impulsively, participating in high risk behaviors, change in sleep and eating patterns, as well as a decline in grades may also come to light.

Allow for the expression of feelings and seeking support from other trusted adults and peers. Share your grief, allow for choices, answer questions truthfully, and watch for high risk behaviors.

No matter what the age, please know the Good Grief Center is here for support of the entire family. For more information, support, and additional resources call: 412-224-4700.



Our mission: *To be a comprehensive bereavement resource and referral center that builds a more compassionate community through grief awareness, education, support and hope; creating a safe place where all who have experienced the pain of death may come to work through loss and learn to manage grief.*

message from the executive director

Dear Friends,

It is very hard to believe this will be the last time I write this message as Executive Director of GGC. As you know, after founding and leading this organization for the past 10 years I have decided it is time for new energy at GGC and new experiences for me.

An Interim Director will be on board at GGC for the next several months while a permanent director is found. All programs will continue and the commitment to being here for all who are grieving will remain strong!

It is hard to sum up 10 years of blood, sweat and tears but I think looking at the highs and lows will have to do for now.

High: relocating GGC to Squirrel Hill. What a feat – and it couldn't have happened without so very many dedicated people, organizations and funders. We work as a team in most every aspect here and in this case the team was immense! There are way too many people to thank individually but please know GGC is what it is today because of hundreds of you. The numbers speak for themselves - we have served as many people in the past two years as we did in the prior seven years combined.

Low: the death of my own mother. I have spent the past 10 years talking to countless numbers of people about how grief is universal and affects everyone so I shouldn't be surprised that I too experienced a huge loss. Again, the team surrounded me – the kindest and most patient staff imaginable and so many of you caring for me with amazing cards, notes, donations and hugs. Always remember how important it is to reach out – especially when those you care about are grieving.

Please keep GGC in the forefront of your minds when friends, colleagues and family need the support of wonderful people who genuinely care. I leave GGC with a great team of staff and volunteers continuing the “good” work and my heartfelt thanks for all they have brought to my life as well as the many to whom they have provided support.

With deep appreciation and gratitude,



Day of Giving Wednesday, October 13th

The best day of the year to support GGC

On **October 13, 2010**, all charitable donations made through PittsburghGives.org will receive a portion of the Pittsburgh Foundation's \$500,000 matching pool. Give to the **Good Grief Center** at anytime on that day and your gift will make an **even greater** impact in our community.

The entire process has been streamlined and all donation options are secure.

Mark your calendar for this year's Day of Giving on **October 13**.

1. Go to <http://www.pittsburghgives.org>
2. Click on Day of Giving
3. Click on Donate Now
4. Enter your name, email and phone number in appropriate boxes. From the drop down box select the Good Grief Center. Enter in donation amount. Minimum donation is \$25.00.
5. Enter in your credit card information on their secure server and click “submit”. You will receive confirmation that your donation has been received and an email will be sent to you for tax purposes.

As always, your contribution is greatly appreciated!



Pittsburghgives.org
a resource of The Pittsburgh Foundation

Bereavement Support Groups

Meeting at the Good Grief Center

Evening Open Group 2nd & 4th Thursday of each month
7-8:30 p.m.

Afternoon Open Group 1st & 3rd Wednesday of each month
3-4:30 p.m.

Daughters without Mothers Group 1st & 3rd Thursday of each month
7-8:30 p.m.


good grief center
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Show your employees and the entire community you support
the **'good'** work of the **Good Grief Center!**




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Call 412-224-4700 to learn more about our
corporate partnership program and how your logo can be
seen in local magazines and billboards.