

GRIEF JOURNALING

Parent's Guide



Good at dipping in and out of their grief, a grieving child may be extremely sad one minute, then play happily the next. Children can find it difficult to put their thoughts and feelings into words. Writing and drawing are two ways in which children may find it easier to express their feelings.

Keeping a grief journal can help children to express their grief and emotions without fear of being judged. It doesn't have to be perfect. They can write or draw whatever they want; the important part is that they are expressing themselves, and exploring their feelings in a safe, healthy way. If they feel comfortable, they may want to share their journal with you, or someone close to them. This can be a great way to start conversations about the loved one they have lost, and how they are coping with their grief.

What they'll need

- A journal or notebook
- Pen(s)
- Crayons, paints, or coloured pens

Each grief journal is unique. There's no right or wrong way to create one. Your child may prefer to use coloured or loose leaf paper, or to write on a tablet or PC. Let them work with what feels right for them. Using a traditional notebook or paper can be useful, as it easily allows for drawing and painting as well as writing.

It can be helpful to set aside some time each day or regularly each week for your child to focus on their journal. Others may find it more useful to just use their journal as and when they feel the need to.

Starter ideas and tips

If they aren't sure where to begin, we have a few ideas you can use to help them get started.

- Write your name, the date, and name of your loved one who has died.
- If you could talk to them for five minutes, what would you say?
- When do you miss them the most?
- What do you miss most about them?
- Write down any important dates and why they are special.
- What's your favourite memory of them? Write or draw it.

Try ending each journaling session on a positive; ask if they can think of a happy memory, or something they are thankful for.

If your child is struggling, suggest they write down what they are stuck on in a couple of words. They can come back and try to work through this idea or feeling later, when they are ready.

Further information and resources

Counselling Directory:

<http://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/childhood-bereavement.html/>

Child Bereavement UK:

<https://childbereavementuk.org/for-families/support-for-bereaved-children/>

NHS children and bereavement:

<https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/bereavement/Pages/children-bereavement.aspx/>

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