COUNSELING CENTER
HAR-BER HIGH SCHOOL

WILDCAT WISDOM

Understanding Grief & Loss

Coping with Heartbreak: You're Not Alone.

Grief is a natural, intense emotional response to loss. It's a journey, not a destination, and everyone experiences it differently. This handout offers a guide to understanding and coping with grief.

What is Grief?

Grief is a deep sorrow, typically caused by the death of a loved one, but it can also be experienced with other significant losses, such as:

- The end of a friendship or relationship
- Moving away from friends/school
- Loss of a pet
- Loss of a dream or expectation
- A major life change (e.g., divorce, serious illness)

Common Feelings & Experiences During Grief

There's no "right" way to grieve. You might feel a mix of:

- **Sadness:** Deep sorrow, emptiness, despair.
- **Anger:** At the situation, at yourself, at others, or even at the person who is gone.
- **Guilt/Regret:** Thinking about what you could have done differently.
- **Confusion:** Disorientation, difficulty concentrating, feeling "foggy."
- **Anxiety/Fear:** Worries about the future, feeling insecure.
- **Numbness:** Feeling nothing at all, a sense of shock.
- **Exhaustion:** Both physical and emotional tiredness.
- **Physical Symptoms:** Headaches, stomach aches, sleep problems, changes in appetite.

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Coping Strategies: How to Navigate Grief

1. **Allow Yourself to Feel:**
    - Don't try to suppress your emotions. It's healthy to cry, be angry, or feel sad.
    - There's no timeline for grief. Be patient with yourself.
2. **Talk About It:**
    - Share your feelings with trusted friends, family members, a counselor, or a teacher.
    - Talking helps process emotions and reminds you you're not alone.
3. **Maintain Healthy Habits (When You Can):**
    - **Sleep:** Try to get enough rest, even if it's hard.
    - **Eat Nutritious Food:** Fuel your body.
    - **Move Your Body:** Exercise can release tension and improve mood.
    - **Avoid Self-Medication:** Don't use drugs or alcohol to numb the pain. It only delays healing.
4. **Find Ways to Remember:**
    - Look at photos, share stories, create a memorial, or engage in activities that honor the person/loss.
5. **Maintain Routine (As Much As Possible):**
    - Going to school, doing homework, and sticking to a schedule can provide a sense of normalcy and structure.
6. **Be Patient with Yourself and Others:**
    - Your friends might not know what to say. Tell them what you need.
    - Understand that others grieve differently.
7. **Seek Professional Support:**
    - If your grief feels overwhelming, lasts for a very long time, interferes with daily life, or if you have thoughts of harming yourself, please reach out for help.
    - School counselors, therapists, and support groups can provide invaluable support

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What Parents/Guardians Need to Know & Can Do to Help

- **Validate Their Grief:** Avoid minimizing their loss, even if it seems "small" to you (e.g., a pet, a friendship breakup). Their feelings are real and intense.
- **Listen Without Judgment:** Provide a safe space for them to express any and all emotions—sadness, anger, confusion, guilt. Don't try to "fix" it, just listen.
- **Be Present & Available:** Even if they don't want to talk, your presence and availability are comforting. Simple acts of care can mean a lot.
- **Encourage Healthy Coping:** Gently encourage them to maintain routines (school, sleep, meals) and engage in self-care activities. Discourage isolating themselves.

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- **Help Them Remember:** Create opportunities to honor the memory of a loved one (e.g., sharing stories, looking at photos, visiting a grave).
- **Recognize Signs of Deeper Distress:** Be aware of prolonged withdrawal, significant changes in eating/sleeping, self-harm thoughts, or inability to function in daily life. These are signs to seek professional help.
- **Seek Support for Yourself:** Grieving is hard for everyone. Model healthy coping by seeking support for your own grief if needed.
- **Communicate with the School:** Inform the school counselor and relevant teachers about the loss so they can offer understanding and support.

Suggested Resources for Further Information:

- **The Dougy Center:** Resources and support for grieving children, teens, and families. (dougy.org)
- **National Alliance for Children's Grief (NACG):** Provides a network of support for grieving children and their families. (childrengrieve.org)
- **Crisis Text Line:** Text HOME to 741741 from anywhere in the US, anytime, about any type of crisis.

See Video Here➡️	Crash Course Psychology - The Growth of Knowledge	When Someone You Love Dies, There is No Such Thing as Moving On	How Repressed Emotions Make Us Sick
Why it's relevant➡️	While not directly about grief, it touches on cognitive development and coping, which can provide context to how teens process complex emotions.	A funny and profound talk on how great things can happen when we continue to tell the stories of those we have lost.	Offers an overview of the way that repressing our emotions can cause physical harm.