

# Grief, Loss & Separation

**A Provider's Guide to  
Helping Children Cope**



**Written By: Julie Christensen**

**Published by: Wildwood Resources**



# Grief, Loss & Separation

*A Provider's Guide to Helping Children Cope*

Written By:

Julie Christensen

Mother of four and an Early Childhood Educator with more than 20 years experience teaching in diverse settings including home child care, public school, and university settings.

**This publication meets the requirements for 3 hours of continuing education credit.**

~

**2 hours of family and community relations training  
1 hour of child growth and development training**

Published by Wildwood Resources  
Copyright 2010

Wildwood Resources  
12200 E. Briarwood Avenue Suite 175  
Centennial, CO 80112  
303-730-0460 or 800-359-9453  
[www.wildwoodonline.org](http://www.wildwoodonline.org)

**The publisher expects that the reader will use the instructions and information contained in these pages in a manner consistent with responsible and safe child care. The reader assumes all risk and responsibility in connection with these instructions.**

**This course may not be copied or reproduced without expressed permission of Wildwood Resources and the Wildwood CAFCP**



# Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 1
Developmental Characteristics of Preschoolers	Page 2
Creating a Peaceful Environment	Page 4
Types of Loss	Page 5
Stages of Grief	Page 6
Common Reactions	Page 8
How to Help	Page 11
The Value of Play	Page 15
Dealing with Behaviors	Page 17
Activities	Page 20
Using Children's Literature	Page 23
Parent Communication	Page 27
Caring for the Caregiver	Page 29
References	Page 31

# Introduction

Childhood is often viewed as a carefree time of innocence, but most children will experience loss at some point. One in two marriages currently ends in divorce and one in twenty children will experience the death of a parent or sibling. These experiences



can negatively impact a child's growth and development. In fact, researchers have found that children who experienced the loss of a parent due to death, divorce or separation have an increased risk of depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia, particularly when the loss occurs before nine years of age (Worden, et al., 1996).

Caregivers will inevitably face the challenge of helping children cope with loss. Many caregivers, however, express feelings of inadequacy and fear. Most worry about doing or saying the wrong thing and dealing with negative behaviors can be difficult in a group setting. However, nurturing, supportive caregivers can have a positive effect in helping children grieve and can even improve long-term outcomes.

# Developmental Characteristics of Preschoolers\*



Caregivers must keep in mind the developmental characteristics of preschoolers as they help them cope with loss. Of course, children develop at different rates and may not always exhibit the following behaviors, but these are general guidelines:

## Egocentric:

Preschoolers have a difficult time understanding the point of view of others. When grieving a loss, they often worry about the following questions:

- Did I cause this to happen?
- Will it happen to me?
- Who will take care of me now?

## Single-Minded:

Young children have difficulty considering more than one thing at a time. When faced with a loss, they may focus on one aspect of the situation. Adults can help them see other perspectives.

## All or Nothing:

Children tend to see situations in very black and white terms. Someone is a friend or an enemy, people are bad or good. Through guidance, children can accept that people can be more than one thing.

## Literal Thinkers:

Young children see the world very literally and have difficulty understanding abstract concepts such as death. They may believe a deceased person will come back or is just sleeping. Because of this, they often will show little or no emotion after a loss. This reflects a lack of understanding, rather than a lack of empathy.



*\* Adapted from Diane E. Levin, Teaching Young Children in Violent Times: Building a Peaceable Classroom (Cambridge, Mass.: Educators for Social Responsibility, 1994).*

## Let's Review:

**Describe the potential negative outcomes faced by children experiencing death or divorce:**

**What are the 3 questions preschoolers generally worry about?**



## Creating a Peaceful Environment

When we think of loss, we tend to think of large life events. But a child experiences loss whenever he is unable to have or keep something that is meaningful to him. Every caregiver has probably had the experience of trying to comfort a child who arrives in the morning distraught over something as seemingly insignificant as not being able to find his/her favorite shoes. Because young children have a limited ability to see the big picture, small things can upset their sense of equilibrium.

When caregivers are empathetic and supportive during those small moments, they can help children gain coping skills that will help them be resilient when faced with greater challenges. Think about how your schedule, environment, and routine support children in developing emotional competency.

- ❖ When children arrive are they greeted warmly?
- ❖ Do they have a place to put their things?
- ❖ Is the schedule predictable?
- ❖ Do you give advance warning when changes occur?
- ❖ Do you take children's concerns and fears seriously?
- ❖ Do you model empathy & respect and give positive feedback when children exhibit pro-social behaviors?
- ❖ Are children provided with a wide variety of activities?
- ❖ Are children allowed to help with jobs?

# Types of Loss



As we discussed previously, children experience loss in many ways. Seven of the most common causes of loss include the following:

- ❖ **Separation from a toy**
- ❖ **Death of a pet**
- ❖ **Moving**
- ❖ **Separation from a parent due to hospitalization or military deployment**
- ❖ **Illness or disability**
- ❖ **Divorce**
- ❖ **Death**

Children's reactions to loss vary greatly. Some reasons for variation may include personality, age, gender, amount of support, previous exposure to traumatic events, and parental reactions. The length of time that children grieve may vary greatly too, minutes, hours, weeks or years, depending on the nature of the loss. Caregivers need to understand that the grieving process is normal and healthy. It is not something that needs to be handled or fixed. A caregiver's main role is one of listener (Duncan, 1992).





# Stages of Grief

Researchers have learned that the process of working through grief generally has several stages. It's helpful for providers to be aware of these stages, although please note that children may not go through them in a neat, sequential order. Children may feel several things at once or re-visit a previous stage.

## ***The stages of grief include:***

### Denial:

This is typically an early response and includes shock and numbness. Additionally, young children often lack an understanding of what has happened or believe the situation is reversible. Children may repeatedly ask the same questions in an attempt to understand.

### Acute Grief:

This period is characterized by anger, guilt, fear, or anxiety. Children may show regressive behaviors such as thumbsucking, bedwetting, or tantrums.

## ***The stages continued...***



### Bargaining:

Children often fantasize about “what if...” or “If I’m very good, maybe mommy and daddy will get back together.” Caregivers can reaffirm that the child did not cause the situation and can not fix it.

### Depression:

The loss has become real. Children often seem lonely, quiet, or may become isolated.

### Acceptance:

Although the child will still have moments of sadness or anger, he/she begins to re-establish normal patterns of life.

*(Duncan, 1992)*

# Common Reactions



Before any discussion of how children may react to loss, take a moment to consider the full impact of the loss in a child's life. In the case of divorce or the death of a parent, many normal routines will likely change.

## **Some consequences of such a loss could include:**

- ❖ Loss of stability
- ❖ Grieving parents may be less available
- ❖ Change in financial situation (fewer toys, snacks, outings, etc.)
- ❖ Moving to a new house (Wood, 2008)

As discussed earlier, children's reactions vary widely to loss. Young children's reactions may generally be said to be "sad, mad, and bad". They feel sad or mad, and their behavior is often bad. (Trozzi, 1999).

## **You may see some of the following behaviors:**

- ❖ Regressive behaviors: thumb sucking, bedwetting, tantrums, clinginess, intensified fears
- ❖ Physical symptoms: eating or sleeping disturbances, bowel or bladder problems, headaches & stomachaches
- ❖ Changes in play: play may become more assaultive and aggressive or children may create well-ordered family life
- ❖ Disruptive behaviors: more talkative, difficulty focusing, arguing with friends, showing need for control
- ❖ Withdrawing behaviors: may seem quiet, withdrawn, bored, or lonely. Reluctant to engage in activities

Let's Review:



**What is the definition of “loss” & what are some losses children may go through?**

**Describe some of the stages of grief children may experience:**

**What are some common reactions to loss?**

*Looking around us, what do we find?*

*A continuous change.*

*The plant comes out of the seed,*

*grows into the tree,*

*completes the circle,*

*and comes back to the seed.*

*The animal comes,*

*lives a certain time, dies,*

*and completes the circle.*

*So does man.*

*The mountains slowly but surely crumble away,*

*the rivers slowly but surely dry up,*

*rains come out of the sea,*

*and go back to the sea.*

*Everywhere circles are being completed,*

*birth, growth, development,*

*and decay following*

*each other with mathematical precision.*

*This is our everyday experience.*

-Swami Vivekananda; Indian monk and saint



## How To Help

Remember, loss is a part of life and all of us will experience grief at some time. A caregiver's most important role in helping children through loss is listening and allowing them to experience the process. Before caregivers can effectively do this, they must be aware of their own emotions and reactions. Consider your own experiences with loss. Were you allowed to feel and express your grief fully? Were you given messages to "keep your chin up" or "be tough"?

If so, you may be uncomfortable with a child expressing grief. Try to be aware of your own feelings. It is a very normal response for adults to feel fear and discomfort or try to avoid sharing grief with children.

Supportive caregivers can provide a safe place for children to express their feelings. Immediately after a traumatic event such as a death, children's thoughts may be dominated by the loss. They may feel fear or may experience denial and numbing. Answer their questions simply and honestly.

After a death children may experience confusion about what has happened. They may ask when the person is coming back or they may state that they have seen the person. Avoid associating death with sleep (Grandpa Joe went to sleep) as the child may develop anxiety over sleeping (Perry and Rubenstein, 2009).

Other pitfalls to avoid include comments such as “the angels came and took him away” or “she was such a good mommy that God needed her in heaven to take care of the babies there.” Children may develop fears or anger towards God (Trozzi, 1999).



With such cultural and religious diversity, it is best to discuss how the parents or guardian would like you to console their child. If the parent or guardian is comfortable with you discussing your views or beliefs, here are a few examples of helpful statements:

**“Everyone has their own beliefs, but I believe...”**

“...that when a person dies, they go to live with God forever.”

“...that we will see our loved ones again in heaven.”

“...even though your mommy isn’t here, she is watching over to protect and keep you.”

When children experience divorce, they may express a fear of abandonment. They often feel guilt and believe they were the cause of the breakup. They may make up bizarre reasons for the divorce and will continue hoping the parents will reconcile.

Children need to be reminded often that what has happened is not their fault and that their parents still love them and will take care of them. Giving permission to feel all emotions is important. Children may need to be reminded that it’s okay to feel happiness and have fun, as well.



Preschoolers won't understand all of the complex issues associated with a military deployment. Their main concern will be the absence of that parent in their daily life. However, they may pick up on anxiety and fear felt by other family members.

Providers can help by providing a stable routine, acknowledging the child's feelings of sadness about the parent's absence, and providing support to the remaining parent. A map with stickers on it showing the location of the parent can give the child a concrete visual about where the deployed parent is. Children may enjoy writing letters, sending e-mails, or making artwork for the absent parent.

Similarly, when a parent is seriously ill or hospitalized, preschoolers may have difficulty understanding. Children may be unable to differentiate between a minor illness, such as a cold, and a more serious illness. They may worry that they will also become sick. An ill parent's appearance and demeanor may seem different and frightening to a young child. When a parent is ill, both parents will most likely be less available for the child and normal routines are often disrupted.

The consistency of a daycare routine can be very normalizing. Providers can answer children's questions simply and honestly. Examples might include, "The tubes in Daddy's arm might look a little wierd, but they help him feel better" or "Remember how you felt a little grouchy when you had a cold? Mommy might seem a little grouchy right now because she doesn't feel very good. But she still loves you and wishes she could play."





Many hospitals offer field trips for preschoolers. A field trip can help a child see the hospital in a non-threatening light. Doing this can also provide a venue for the child to share their experience with the other children. Setting up a doctor's office pretend center can also provide opportunities for children to express their feelings through play.

Providers must avoid judging, blaming or criticizing. Avoid giving advice and remember that it's not necessary to know all the answers. In fact, children will appreciate candor, kindness, and respect most.

**Some key phrases for helping children share feelings might include:**

- ❖ I see that you are \_\_\_\_\_.
- ❖ It looks/sounds like you feel \_\_\_\_\_.
- ❖ Do you think \_\_\_\_\_?
- ❖ It sounds like \_\_\_\_\_ happens when \_\_\_\_\_.

(Kreideler and Whittall, 1999).

Children often feel a loss of control after a significant event. Because of their egocentric nature, they may believe that they both caused and can fix the situation. Understanding that they are not responsible is a big task. Watch for and correct erroneous thought patterns and beliefs. Allowing children to participate in tasks and projects is a way of giving them back some control. A child may not be able to fix his/her parents' divorce, but can tend a garden, care for a pet, help make cookies, or read to a younger child (Prestine, 1996).

# The Value of Play



All children need to express feelings of loss, but many children have difficulty doing so verbally. Play and art are two of the main nonverbal vehicles for children to express themselves. It is important to allow plenty of opportunities for both. Materials like a play kitchen, blocks, dolls (and a dollhouse), puppets, dress-up clothes, clay, paint, and crayons all provide creative outlets for children. Providers can get children started by modeling creative behaviors themselves.

You may feel silly at first, but you'll soon get the hang of it. While at the dollhouse, for example, you can talk about the dolls:

***“This is Michelle, she’s the mommy and this is Megan, she’s the daughter. Right now Mommy is bringing Megan to daycare for the day. Bye, Megan. Mommy’s going to work now. Now Megan is playing with her teacher. She feels sad that she has to be at daycare, away from her mommy, but she’s happy that she gets to play with playdough.”***



Or at the art table, draw a picture of a time when you felt sad, mad, or happy, talking about what happened and how you felt. Clay can be used to mold people or other symbolic items. It can also be used as a source of emotional release through pounding and kneading.

Providing time for gross motor activities will also help with emotional release. Structured activities such as dance, parachute, and games are enjoyable, but perhaps the most effective activity is unstructured outdoor play. Time spent in nature can be therapeutic for children. While exploring bugs or playing in the dirt, children can be “in the moment,” temporarily forgetting their sadness.

Watching children’s play is a valuable tool in assessing where in the grief process they are. By listening, providers can gain insights into questions and fears the child may have. At a later time, in a non-threatening way, the provider can talk with the child about those observations.



# Dealing with Behaviors

Coping with negative behaviors can be very challenging for providers. Accepting and anticipating these challenges will help providers plan ahead and keep perspective. Implementing ideas previously mentioned about environment, structure, and activity will help minimize behaviors, but not entirely eliminate them.

**Below are some additional ideas that may help:**

- ❖ Set clear expectations and boundaries. At no other time is this more important. When a child's life lacks stability, he/she will test you to make sure you can be trusted.
- ❖ Be kind and flexible. Recognize that a child's ability to 'keep it together' may be hindered. There will be good and bad days. Work out a signal between the two of you for when a child is feeling wound up.
- ❖ Provide outlets for relief when the child gives you that signal. Maybe the child can go to a special, quiet place to read a book or pound on playdough.
- ❖ Teach appropriate responses to negative emotions. For example, when a child is angry he can use calmdown steps like taking a deep breath, counting to ten, walking away or asking for your help.

- ❖ Teach problem solving skills. For example, teach children to ask for toys rather than grabbing. When two children are experiencing conflict, teach them how to share feelings: “I don’t like that. Please stop.” Caregivers often use the phrase, “Use your words.” The truth is that children don’t generally know what words to use until we model those words ourselves many times.



- ❖ Focus on the positive. Use clear, descriptive language that describes the good behavior you saw-“David, I could tell you were feeling angry, but I watched you take a deep breath and ask for a turn with the car. Great job!”
- ❖ When talking with parents, discuss the behaviors seen; avoid making judgements or assigning labels. “David seemed angry today. He kicked the toys several times and hit one of his friends. We talked about how he was feeling and what he could do instead. He seemed to calm down after he played with some playdough.” Remember, the parents may be struggling, as well. Find positives and avoid relaying every negative incident.
- ❖ Recognize your limits. Children who are hurting often lash out angrily at teachers and caregivers. Sometimes these behaviors are more than a teacher or caregiver can handle, especially if there is a danger of other children being injured. Sit down with parents to discuss solutions which might include a behavior contract, counseling for the child and family, a temporary break from daycare, or fewer hours spent in daycare. Occasionally, a child will need to be removed permanently from a daycare situation, although this should be a last resort.

*Let's Review:*



**What are three ways that children express their feelings?**

**List four ways to deal with challenging behaviors:**

# Fun Group Activities



*Ideas adapted from J. Prestine. 1996. Mom and Dad Break Up and Helping Children Understand Divorce*

## Rain on My Parade:

On a warm day, allow children to play with a garden hose. As the water runs down into the soil, talk about how the child's loss has 'rained on his/her parade.' Discuss how some things have changed or made the child sad. As the water runs, discuss how sad feelings and disappointment won't always stay. Like the water, they can be washed away. Discuss the idea that it is okay to be happy and have fun.

## Sweet Sharing:

Share a small bowl of m&ms with the group. State that if someone picks out a red or yellow candy, they can tell about something that made them feel happy. If someone picks a green or blue candy, they can share something that made them feel sad. As children are going through a loss, it's important to recognize that everyone has negative feelings sometimes.

## New Memories Book:

Have child list fun activities they would like to do with mom or dad. In this way, the child can be helped to start thinking about the future and celebrate new routines and activities.

## X Marks the Spot:

Children experiencing grief often complain of physical ailments. It is sometimes hard to discern whether they are truly ill or feeling sad or lonely. Both situations require care. Draw a picture of a body on a piece of paper. Ask the child to put an “X” on the spot where it hurts. As the child goes through this activity, you can gently say things like, “You know, sometimes when I feel worried, my stomach hurts. It feels tight, like it has a knot in it. Do you ever feel that way?” Just talking about feelings and physical sensations may help the child feel better.



## Stars for You:

Recognize events or routines that may cause a child anxiety, such as being picked up from daycare by a non-custodial parent. The child may cry and resist going with that parent because he/she misses the other parent. Acknowledge the child’s feelings, and then talk about ways to handle the situation. Allow the child to draw pictures of how he wants to react to the situation next time. Each time he is able to successfully manage the situation, let him put a star on the paper. Share with the child that you know the situation is difficult and you’re very proud of his/her successes.

## Family Tree:

Draw a tree and allow the child to write the names of his family and extended family on leaves or apples that can be glued to the tree. Discuss pleasant memories the child may have about extended family members or activities they may participate in together. Help child understand that he can seek support outside his immediate family from extended family members.





## Face Plates:

Use paper plates and collage materials to make puppets featuring different emotions. These can be used to role play how a child might feel in different situations. A discussion of possible ways to handle difficult emotions can be helpful.

## The Best Things:

After the death of a parent or sibling, many children worry about forgetting that person. Being able to share favorite memories is an important part of memorializing. As a group, children can draw pictures of the best things about mom or the best things about dad. These pictures can be bound into a book that can be placed in the story corner.

## Mail Carrier:

When children have experienced divorce, they may spend a lot of time away from one parent. Helping children connect with that parent can be helpful. Allowing the child to send e-mails, draw pictures, or write letters to the parent are all ways for the child to communicate.

## Worry Box:

Allow the child to decorate a small box and label it "the Worry Box." The child can draw pictures or write notes about things that worry him. He can put these worries in the worry box. Discuss with the child that adults will handle the worries and he/she can leave them in the worry box.

## Family Day:

Consider how difficult holidays can be after a loss. When planning activities such as a Mother's Day Tea or Father's Day Barbecue, be sensitive to the children in your care. Perhaps a Family Day is more appropriate.



## Using Children's Literature

Picture books allow children to explore feelings in a non-threatening way. They send a clear, comforting message that “you are not alone.” Books can pave the way for discussion and help other children in your care understand a difficult situation.

When selecting picture books, always select books carefully and read them before sharing with the children. Choose books that have appealing illustrations and interesting story content. Children love books with broad humor, surprise elements, appealing refrains, and authentic depictions. Avoid books that are inaccurate, patronizing, or preachy. Also make sure books are well written, developmentally appropriate and free of sexist language or racial bias (Mercurio, 2006). Specifically related to choosing books on loss, look for stories that “portray fears with which children can identify, resolve fears successfully, and convey coping strategies and external resources,” (Trousdale, 1989).

# Picture Books About Divorce



- ❖ **I Don't Want to Talk About It**  
Jeanie Franz Ransom; Magination Press. September 2000
- ❖ **It's Not Your Fault, Koko Bear**  
Vicki Lansky; The Book Peddlers. December 15, 1997
- ❖ **Mama and Daddy Bear's Divorce**  
Cornelia Maude Spelman; Albert Whitman & Co. January 1, 1998
- ❖ **Mom & Dad Don't Live Together Anymore**  
Kathy Stinson; Annick Press. August 17, 2007
- ❖ **My Family's Changing**  
Pat Thomas; Barron's Educational Series. February 1, 1999
- ❖ **Standing on My Own Two Feet**  
Tamara Schmitz; Price Stern Sloan. June 12, 2008
- ❖ **The Most Important Thing**  
Rhonda Roth; Crossing Guard Books. December 1, 2006
- ❖ **Two Homes**  
Claire Masurel; Candlewick. July 14, 2003
- ❖ **Was It the Chocolate Pudding?**  
Sandra Levins; American Psychological Association. September 2005
- ❖ **When Mom and Dad Divorce**  
Emily Menendez-Aponte; Abbey Press. December 1999
- ❖ **When My Parents Forgot How to Be Friends**  
Jennifer Moore-Mallinos; Barron's Educational Series. March 1, 2005



# Picture Books About Military Deployment

- ❖ **A Paper Hug**  
Stephanie Skolmoski; Self Published. June 12, 2006
- ❖ **A Yellow Ribbon for Daddy**  
Anissa Mersiowsky; Veritas Media. February 28, 2005
- ❖ **Daddy's in Iraq, but I Want him Back**  
Carmen R. Hoyt; Trafford Publishing. December 6, 2005
- ❖ **I Miss You!**  
Beth Andrews; Prometheus Books. April 3, 2007
- ❖ **Love, Lizzie: Letters to a Military Mom**  
Lisa Tucker McElroy; Albert Whitman & Company. January 1, 2005
- ❖ **My Mommy Wears Combat Boots**  
Sharon McBride; AuthorHouse. February 28, 2008
- ❖ **Night Catch**  
Brenda Ehrmantraut; Bubble Gum Pr. July 2005
- ❖ **Red, White, and Blue Good-bye**  
Sarah Wones Tomp; Walker Books for Young Readers. April 30, 2005
- ❖ **When Dad's at Sea**  
Mindy Pelton; Albert Whitman & Company. January 1, 2004
- ❖ **While You Are Away**  
Eileen Spinelli; Hyperion Book CH. January 29, 2008

# Picture Books About Death



❖ **Badger's Parting Gifts**

Susan Varley; HarperCollins. July 16, 1992

❖ **For the Grieving Child: An Activities Manual**

Suzan Jaffe; Self-Published. February 6, 2008

❖ **Gentle Willow**

Joyce C. Mills; Magination Press. November 2003

❖ **I'll Always Love You**

Hans Wilhelm; Dragonfly Books. December 12, 1988

❖ **I Miss You: A First Look At Death**

Pat Thomas; Barron's Educational Series. January 1, 2001

❖ **Saying Goodbye to Lulu**

Corinne Demas; Little, Brown Books for Young Readers. September 1, 2009

❖ **The Dragonfly Door**

John Adams; Feather Rock Books, Inc. January 24, 2007

❖ **The Fall of Freddie the Leaf**

Leo Buscaglia PhD; Slack Incorporated. June 1, 1982

❖ **The Next Place**

Warren Hanson; Waldman House Press. September 1997

❖ **When a Pet Dies**

Fred Rogers; Putnam Juvenile. April 13, 1998

❖ **Where Are You?**

Laura Olivieri; Lulu.com. November 9, 2007

# Communicating with Parents



Many of the previous ideas for supporting children during loss can be applied to parents. They too will go through stages of grief. In addition to grieving the loss of a loved one or a divorce, they are often struggling with financial worries, additional workloads at home, and anxiety about parenting. Because of this, they may be less open or available for communication. However, childcare providers and families will benefit when open communication is maintained.

## **Below are some ideas:**

- ❖ Give positive feedback to parents about their child whenever possible. When sharing negative information about behaviors, give examples of strategies and problem-solving ideas you've found effective. Ask the parents for advice, as well. They are the experts on their child.
- ❖ Keep accurate records of attendance. These records have occasionally been requested in custody cases.
- ❖ Avoid making judgments. Almost all parents want to be loving and responsive, but after a trauma, they may temporarily seem more unstable or emotionally unavailable.



- ❖ Get a record of any custody agreement with regard to contact with the children.
- ❖ Let parents know that your first concern is the best interests of the child. In the case of divorce, don't take sides. But do encourage parents to share details with you on a "need to know basis" only.
- ❖ Life may be temporarily unstable for families, which can affect you with regard to tuition payments or children being picked up in a timely manner. Decide ahead of time how you will deal with these situations.
- ❖ Be kind, respectful, and flexible.
- ❖ Be creative in your approach to communication and ask parents how they would prefer to receive information. Non-custodial parents, especially, will appreciate your efforts to keep them informed.
- ❖ Keep confidences and avoid gossip.



## Taking Care of the Caregiver

Let's face it, helping families cope with loss can be one of the biggest challenges daycare providers face. Children and parents alike may be emotional, unpredictable, or downright difficult to work with. Other parents in the program may express concern about the situation, especially if a child is showing aggressive behavior. Additionally, providers may be concerned about their own family's reactions and safety. Providers often face many pressures and generally feel isolated and unsure of what to do.

Please remember that helping a child and his/her family through a loss is a tremendously difficult, but important, effort. While a parent may not express appreciation in the middle of a crisis, he/she will likely remember your work for many years. Try not to take angry outbursts personally. They are generally not about you at all.

If you find yourself feeling burned-out, angry, resentful, or at your wits end, this is a cue that something needs to change. Take some time to assess what the problem is. In your efforts to be supportive, you may be giving more than you should. You may need to establish new boundaries and limits. Talk honestly with the parents about your concerns and feelings. Make sure they know of your genuine concern and regard for their family to help lessen defensive reactions. Seek support from other providers, as well as community organizations.



# Books For Adults



- ❖ **35 Ways to Help a Grieving Child**  
Dougy Center Staff; Dougy Center. October 25, 1999
- ❖ **Bereaved Children & Teens: Guide for Parents & Professionals**  
Beacon Press; 1995
- ❖ **Growing Up with Divorce**  
Neil Kalter; Ballantine Books. 1990
- ❖ **Helping Children Cope with the Loss of a Loved One: A Guide for Grownups**  
William C. Kroen; Free Spirit Publishing. January 15, 1996
- ❖ **Helping Your Kids Cope with Divorce the Sandcastles Way**  
M. Gary Neuman, Patricia Romanowski; Random House. July 27, 1999
- ❖ **How to Talk to Your Children About Divorce**  
Jill Jones-Soderman, Allison Quattrocchi; Family Mediation Center Publishing Co.  
June 15, 2006
- ❖ **Talking about Death: A Dialogue Between Parent and Child**  
Earl A. Grollman; Beacon Press. November 16, 1991
- ❖ **What About the Kids? Raising Your Children Before, During & After Divorce**  
Judith S. Wallerstein; Hyperion. March 17, 2004
- ❖ **When Children Grieve: For Adults to Help Children Deal with Death, Divorce, Pet Loss, Moving, and Other Losses**  
John W. James; Harper Paperbacks. June 4, 2002

# References



## **Coping Skills. Young Children, Vol. 63, Issue 5**

Wood, Fr. (2008)

Retrieved from: [www.proquest.com](http://www.proquest.com)

## **Early Childhood Adventures in Peacemaking**

Kreidler, W. and Whittall, S. (1999)

Cambridge, MA: Educators for Social Responsibility.

## **Healing Words, Healing Hearts: Using Children's Literature to Cope With the Loss of a Pet**

Mercurio, M. (2006)

Retrieved from: [www.proquest.com](http://www.proquest.com)

## **Mom & Dad Break Up and Helping Children Understand Divorce**

Prestine, J. (1996)

Retrieved from: [www.eric.org](http://www.eric.org)

## **Parental Death and the Adjustment of School Age Children**

Worden, J.W. and Silverman, P.R. (1996)

Omega: Journal of Death and Dying, 33.

## **Parental Illness: Helping Children Cope**

Yearian, D.

Retrieved from: <http://www.dallaschild.com>



## References cont...

### **Talking With Children About Loss**

Trozzi, M. (1999)  
New York, New York: Berkeley Publishing Group.

### **Teaching Young Children in Violent Times: Building a Peaceable Classroom**

Levin, D. (1994)  
Cambridge, MA: Educators for Social Responsibility.

### **The Child's Loss: Death, Grief and Mourning**

Perry, B. And Rubenstein, J. (2008)  
Retrieved from: <http://teacher.scholastic.com>

### **The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda**, vol. II, 10th ed

Vivekananda, Swami. (1989)  
Mayavati Memorial Edition. Calcutta: Advaitsa Ashram, 226-27.

### **Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?**

Trousdale, A. (1989)  
Children's Literature in Education, 20(2), 69-79.

### **Working with Military Children: A Primer for School Personnel**

Virginia Joint Military Services Board and the Military Child Education Child Coalition. (2001)



When you have completed this course, click [HERE](#) to take the test.  
Your order "Confirmation Number" is your "Test Number"

Thank you for choosing us for your  
continuing education needs:

Wildwood Resources  
...for those who care for children  
12200 E. Briarwood Ave. Suite 175  
Centennial, CO 80112

Visit us online for more  
great tips and information:

[www.wildwoodonline.org](http://www.wildwoodonline.org)  
[www.facebook.com/WildwoodCACFP](https://www.facebook.com/WildwoodCACFP)