Reading Recommendations for Children

UNDER AGE 7

**A Funeral for Whiskers** by Dr. Lawrence Balter
Sandy is sad and confused after her cat Whisker dies. She is helped by her parents and a funeral for Whiskers. A helpful essay for parents on children’s grief is at the end of the book.

**Double Dip Feelings** by Barbara B. Cafri
Discusses how sometimes we feel opposite feelings at the same time. Gives good examples from everyday life. Not directly related to loss but useful in helping children understand their feelings.

**Parent, Grandparent, Goodbye** by Lucille Clifton
Young African-American boy has a hard time with different feelings he has after his father dies.

**Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs** by Tomie de Paola
Beautiful illustrations of nature with simple writings about beginnings and endings of plants, animals and people.

**To be read to young school age children. A touching story about the love of a boy, his grandmother and great-grandmother, and how he copes with their deaths.**

**Gran Gran’s Best Trick** by L. Dwight Holden, M.D.
Old Badger was a good friend and teaches to the woodland creatures and they are overwhelmed when he dies. Then each remembers what Badger has taught them. A good story about old age, and the importance of memories.

**My Feelings Are Like Wild Animals** by Gary Egeberg
A simply written and colorfully illustrated story of the tender relationship between a grandfather and his grandmother. The little girl is left with many good memories after her grandfather dies.

AGE 7 AND UP

**Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day** by Judith Viorst
A classic story -- a comfort to anyone who has ever had a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day. It helps to know others have had days, too.

**Annie and the Old One by Miska Miles**
A beautifully written Newbery Honor book about a young Navajo girl dealing with the approach of her grandmother’s death.

**Badger’s Parting Gifts** by Susan Varley
Old Badger was a good friend and teaches to the woodland creatures and they are overwhelmed when he dies. Then each remembers what Badger has taught them. A good story about old age, and the importance of memories.

**Geranium Morning** by E. Sandy Powell
Two friends whose parent dies, one suddenly in a car accident and one from illness, learn to deal with their grief. The book includes feeling different and having problems at school, as well as changes in the family after a death, and dealing with grief.

**My Feelings Are Like Wild Animals** by Gary Egeberg
This is a practical guide to help teens (and former teens) feel and deal with painful emotions. This is made in work-book format and is appealing looking with lots of helpful information and activities.

DEPRESSION — THERE IS A WAY OUT

**Sponsor**

**HOSPICE OF THE NORTH COAST**

**Grief's Journey**

**Grief’s Journey, Issue Seven**

**Call us to schedule individual grief counseling and/or group information.**

**Hope Bereavement Center**

**Gumpert Foundation**

**Dear Friend,**

As you continue working through your grief, we at Hospice continue to think about you and how you are doing on your journey to recovery. We are interested in the emotional landscape of your journey, how you have learned to express your emotions and how you have learned to temper them.

The variety and intensity of the emotions and experiences associated with loss can be very difficult to manage. No matter how much we reassure you that your experiences and emotions are natural and necessary, and no matter how much we urge you to accept them, you must face the practical challenges of living with them.

The loss of a loved one can trigger a wide range of emotional responses that vary in duration and intensity. This bulletin contains suggestions for how to cope with three very difficult emotions: depression, guilt and anger.

These suggestions are drawn from the experience of other bereaved people, from research, and from our professional experience. We hope it will help.

**Join us at one of our annual events**

**BUTTERFLY RELEASE**

To Be Announced
Details to come
Call for information

**LIGHT UP A LIFE**

To Be Announced
Details to come
Call for information

All of these events are open to the community

For more information, contact the Hope Bereavement Center at (760) 431-4100

**Hospice of the North Coast • Hope Bereavement Center**

2525 Pio Pico Drive, Suite 301 • Carlsbad, CA 92008 • Tel: (760) 431-4100 • www.hospicenorthcoast.org

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permission to feel and express difficult emotions. Talking with a friend or counselor, reading books about personal experiences of grief, and writing in a journal can help.

Recognize that depression can be part of the recovery process from loss and can serve a purpose. Depression comes during the natural period of disintegration that follows a major loss. The apathy of depression can allow you to release the past and eventually reorganize your thoughts, feelings, and daily life in the present.

Be aware of the effect of your thoughts on your mood. Notice when your thoughts hurt and recognize that you can choose thoughts that feel good. You can think about things that give you pleasure and confidence. Notice pessimistic, discouraging, suspicious thoughts and practice replacing them with helpful, encouraging, patient, gentle, trusting thoughts.

Also be aware of the effect of your activities, body positions, and facial expressions on your mood. Give yourself permission to do things that give you pleasure and a sense of accomplishment. Add yoga, meditation or prayer to your daily life. Eliminate habits (such as alcohol) that exacerbate depression.

As you seek a way out of depression, continue to allow yourself the full range of grief emotions. Acknowledge them, express them, and release them. The only negative emotion is one that is not acknowledged and expressed. Lean into your pain and reward yourself by leaning into pleasure.

**MOVING BEYOND GUILT**

During your grief journey, you will undoubtedly experience many different feelings. Guilt feelings and self-blame are almost inevitable when you have had a loss. Whatever your situation—your child, your marriage, your job, your health, wherever you have had a loss, you will likely blame yourself for some reason.

While these feelings may be genuine, they are often unrealistic. Like many people, you may be too harsh with yourself. In your imagination you believe that you are responsible for anticipating their death or that your feelings don’t go on forever and won’t destroy you. Teens often have not learned this yet and find it helpful to be reassured.

Just as in adulthood, teenagers need support and need to feel heard. This may allow them to be more in touch with their softer feelings and to express them. This will help decrease their anger. Avoid judging. In their battle for independence, teens are sensitive to parental judgment and may be rebellious.

Be aware of your own needs and losses so you can avoid distorting your relationships with your teens. Otherwise, you can make things into “mini-adults” or parent figures by expecting too much of them or trying to keep them young.

Expect and accept a dip in academic performance. Ease your expectations and place limits on the responsibilities of the student while your teen is more concerned with memories of the past and coping day to day. Be there for the teen; give permission to take a lighter load and encourage your teen to see a school counselor if needed.

Respect their need for privacy. Teens need a place they can call their own. They see disrespect of their privacy as a major threat to their independence.

Understand how teens think more abstractly so you will be ready for any philosophical discussions. Avoid undue upset or harsh reaction, for example, “why did you do that?”, “you shouldn’t have done that!”

When you can, add perspective to the teen’s urgent discussions. You may need weeks, months or years to process the “what if”’s and how things might have been or how you could have acted differently. Eventually you will find forgiveness and see things from a different perspective. You won’t need to blame yourself. The time will come when you can learn and move on.

**Handling Explosive Emotions**

While grieving, you may experience a whole range of explosive emotions such as anger, hate, blame, terror, rage, and jealousy. While these emotions may be volatile, they are a natural part of your grief journey. However, these emotions generally rest on many other feelings like anguish, bitterness, helplessness, fear and hurt. It’s important to give yourself permission to feel whatever you feel right now.

Unfortunately, you may suppress these feelings, leaving you more depressed and physically stressed. This then leads to feeling even more symptoms of anxiety.

Remember, your feelings are neither good nor bad, they simply are. It is best to acknowledge and express them, rather than judge them. This is the key to your healing journey; explosive emotions must be expressed, not surprised. If your strong emotions have an appropriate outlet, eventually they will weaken.

Express them by talking about them with someone who will listen, by screaming them when you are alone, by writing them, or through some particular physical activity where you expend a lot of energy. Fit nurture objects – be careful not to hurt yourself or another. Take regular walks instead of dealing with your emotions by religion.

Regardless of your upbringing, your strong feelings can be diffused by finding safe and appropriate ways to vent and release volatile emotions. You will be able to look more deeply into yourself at what lies below the layers of rage or accusation. In time you will be able to let go and move on, no longer bound to the pain of your grief.

**Parent’s Corner**

*DEALING WITH TEENS WHO ARE GRIEVING*

**“The main thing in life is not to be afraid to be human.”**  
*Pablo Casals*

The teen’s intense feelings threaten their sense of independence which, in turn, threatens their sense of independence. They often do not understand that these feelings will pass and will not destroy them. They long for closeness with other people yet the closeness requires them to be vulnerable and childlike. It is difficult for them to accept vulnerability so they shun intimacy at the very same time they long for it.

 Teens, especially boys, are afraid of their softer feelings like sadness, fear and loneliness. They use anger to cover their vulnerability to these feelings and to feel more powerful. This sense of power is also a major bastion in their defense against death anxiety.

The normal development of independence in teens includes evaluating their parents and other adults. They no longer see their parents as perfect. Their disappointment may be intense. Parents need to accept their sense of disappointment, so their teens don’t become frustrated in their drive for independence and become rebellious. Teens are more adult-like in their cognitive development than children. Children ask concrete questions about death: “What happens when we die?” Teens think about the meaning of life abstractly: “What is real?” and “What’s it all about?” Because of their abstract view of life, their volcanic emotions and their impulsive responses, teens are more accident-prone and at a great risk for suicide.

For all children, grief can make concentration difficult and their grades may typically drop. Teens, though, are preparing for college or the work place. A dip in grades provokes anxiety for the student and parents, and is a concern for the teachers.

**Teens and Feelings**

Below are ten important facts about feelings for teens:

1. Unpleasant feelings add to the quality and meaning of our lives.
2. Unpleasant feelings bring us information.
3. Unpleasant feelings often want a response from us: recognition, resolution, and some action to lessen the feeling.
4. Feelings are changing rather than permanent. Pleasant and unpleasant emotions come and go.
5. There is an up-and-down cycle of feelings. When we are at the bottom, our challenge is to remember that we will cycle up again.
6. We cannot usually get rid of our unpleasant feelings instantly. We can, however, take some simple actions to help ourselves through the pain.
8. We are responsible for our feelings and for how we choose to express them.
9. How we choose about an event or about what happens to us determines how we feel.
10. We may need to seek professional counseling for help with our painful emotions.