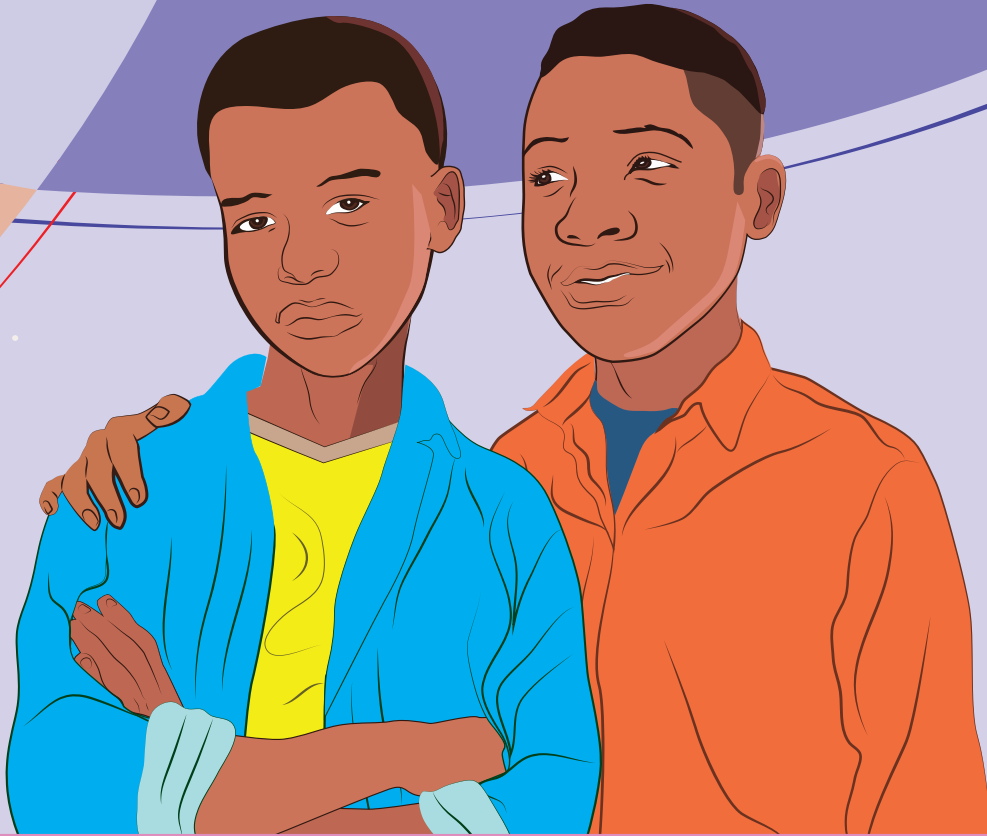


LOSS AND GRIEF



Grief is what we feel when we lose someone, or something, important. There are many kinds of losses, including death, divorce, a parent leaving us, separation from siblings, moving, having to drop out of school, loss of hopes and dreams.

Loss can change how we see ourselves, our life, and the world around us.

A loss may stir up feelings and memories related to past losses, even when the two seem unrelated.

Grief does not end quickly after loss of someone we love. We adjust but may always feel sad about losing them. Even years later, something may trigger strong feelings of grief for a while. Happy events, such as a marriage or birth of a child, might cause strong feelings of missing the person. This is normal. It helps to reach out and get support at these times.

Feelings that come with grief can be overwhelming or confusing. You might keep quiet, fearing that people might judge you or think you're weak.

Common feelings with grief include:

- Sadness
- Anger
- Jealousy -of others who are not bereaved
- Anxiety
- Loneliness
- Relief - when suffering is over after a long illness
- Guilt -feeling responsible for causing or not preventing the death
- Feeling vulnerable and unprotected
- Feeling out of place

Myths vs Truth

Common myths about grief	Truths about grief
With time we 'get over' the loss and 'let go' of the person we loved.	It takes time to adjust to life without the person, but we keep them in our mind and heart. We don't want to forget them, nor should we. We learn to 'hold on' to them but in different ways.
Young children do not grieve because they don't understand death.	Children of all ages grieve. They may not understand death, but even very young children react to the absence of a person.
It is best to shield children from loss, as they are too young to cope with tragedy.	We may want to protect children from loss and pain, but it is not possible. Shielding them only excludes them from support and leaves them to cope alone.
Children get over loss more quickly than adults do.	Children can't stay with strong feelings for long periods of time. Focusing on their grief may pass quickly but it will return just as fast. They revisit losses as they grow, their understanding of death changes, and they face new life experiences without the person. Their grief will come and go from their thoughts over the years.
If a parent dies when a child is young, they won't remember them so won't miss them later on.	A child or adolescent is very aware that they had parents who died, of all they have lost and that they do not have the special child-parent bond. Not having memories of the parent can make things harder, not easier. Their need for the parent changes but it doesn't go away.
Talking about or looking at photographs of the deceased keeps wounds open.	Managing grief means finding ways to hold on to the relationship with the person who died. Children need help remembering, or 'getting to know' the person through stories and photographs. Sharing memories and stories helps build a new, and necessary relationship with the deceased.

Grief is manageable with support! It is helpful to talk about our losses, so we get that support. It helps us to feel better and to remember the people we love, which is important. They are part of who we are.

