



# CHILDHOOD TRAUMATIC GRIEF: YOUTH INFORMATION SHEET

## WHAT IS GRIEF?

Grief is the word used to describe the different natural feelings we have after someone dies. You can grieve after a family member, friend, or other important person dies. You can show a range of:

- EMOTIONS & REACTIONS:** Sometimes you can be sad and miss the person. Other times you feel up to doing your usual activities, like hanging out with friends.
- THOUGHTS:** You can remember positive things about the person, but also have thoughts that bother you, have trouble focusing, or have other worries.
- BEHAVIORS:** Your behavior may change. You may be less active, be irritable, not eat or sleep as much as before, or hang out less with friends, and want to be by yourself more.

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There is no set amount of time for grieving. Most of you will find ways to cope with your feelings and the changes in your life. It is natural and OK if you still feel sad or miss the person even months or years later; especially if you are reminded of that person on certain special dates, events, activities or places you went together.

## WHO GETS CHILDHOOD TRAUMATIC GRIEF?

Most of you who experience the death of someone important adjust and recover over time. However, some of you may have more trouble adjusting and may develop Childhood Traumatic Grief. This can happen if the death was sudden, such as from a homicide, suicide, mass shooting, disaster, accident, or an unexpected medical reason. However, you can also have a traumatic reaction even if the death was from natural causes like old age, or a terminal illness such as cancer, especially if it was sudden, confusing, or scary in some way.

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## HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE TRAUMATIC GRIEF?

If you have Traumatic Grief you may:

- Have upsetting thoughts, images, nightmares, or memories about the scary way the person died that come into your head.
- Experience physical reaction such as headaches, stomachaches, or sensations that resemble how the person died.
- Become jumpy or have trouble concentrating.
- Avoid feelings or withdraw. Act as if you are not upset about the death or avoid reminders of the person, such as the way the person died, places or things related to the person, or events that led to their death.
- Remain in a bad mood or have unpleasant beliefs related to the traumatic death, such as being angry, feeling guilty, blaming yourself, distrusting others, or think the world is unsafe.
- Feel more irritable, have trouble sleeping or concentrating, or see your grades start dropping.
- Become extra careful and have more fears about your safety and others.
- Do self-destructive or risky things, like abuse alcohol or drugs, and feel like you want to hurt yourself.



## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO FEEL BETTER?

There are a lot of different things you can do to cope with grief related traumatic reactions, such as:

- Express your feelings in creative ways such as art, writing, or dancing.
- Do calming activities such as yoga or listen to music.
- Talk to friends and family to help you through.
- Check in with a mental health professional to see if you need more help.

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## WHAT IF I NEED MORE HELP?

Special therapy can help you pull things back together with friends, at school, and at home. You can learn what sets off your reactions as well as ways to take control of them.

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