

Introduction

Grief. Grief is difficult, yet something that everybody has to experience at one time or another. Grief is a part of life, though something we would like to avoid. Like all societal issues, grief eventually comes to school. What do we do when a school is grief stricken? This book is written to help school counselors, teachers, and administrators know how to respond when grief affects a school.

I will never forget that Friday in March 2005. It had been an ordinary day, and I was looking forward to the weekend. Just as I was walking through the office at the end of the day, a co-op student asked me to pick up the phone. It was someone at the transportation office she said, and it was urgent. I took a deep breath, said a quick prayer, and picked up the phone. After the voice on the line had me identify myself as the school counselor, I heard, "One of the bus drivers just ran over a student...he's frantic...EMS has been called...but can you go to the neighborhood?" Of course, I went, taking the school nurse with me.

The worst of course had happened...the student died from the accident. Our school was overcome with grief. Thank goodness, I was not the only counselor. Together, Bill Ryland and I made it through the next couple of weeks, helping students, teachers, parents, and administrators cope with the loss. Helping others grieve when you are grieving yourself is very difficult. It certainly would have been helpful to have had a grief recovery resource at my fingertips. Thus, the idea for this book was born.

I hope that your school does not have to experience the sudden or expected loss of a student, staff, or family member. However, if your school does experience such a loss, hopefully this book will help guide you through the grief process while helping others.

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Table of Contents

Dedication / Acknowledgmentspage 3
Introductionpage 4

Mending Hearts: Tools for School Staff and Parents

When A Tragic Loss Occurs (Crisis Team Checklist)page 9
Helping 3-5 Year Olds (Parent/Teacher Handout)page 10
Helping 6-7 Year Olds (Parent/Teacher Handout)page 11
Helping 8-10 Year Olds (Parent/Teacher Handout)page 12
Helping 11-13 Year Olds (Parent/Teacher Handout)page 13

Mending Hearts: Understanding the Stages of Grief

The Five Stages of Grief.....page 18
Talking to Kids about Grief: Dos and Don'ts of Communication.....page 19

Mending Hearts...When a School Grieves

A Story for Children.....page 21

Mending Hearts: Group Counseling Sessions

Parental Permission Letterpage 37
Intro Session: "Me Box"page 38
My Feelings Are Okaypage 40
Teddy Bear Feelingspage 41
Memory Bookspage 42

Mending Hearts: Activities for Individuals or Small Groups

I Got the Bluespage 53
Seeds of Hopepage 54
Anger Awarenesspage 55
Things to Do with My Angerpage 56
My Mood Picturepage 57
Let's Make a Dealpage 58

Mending Hearts: Bibliotherapypage 59

Bibliographypage 64

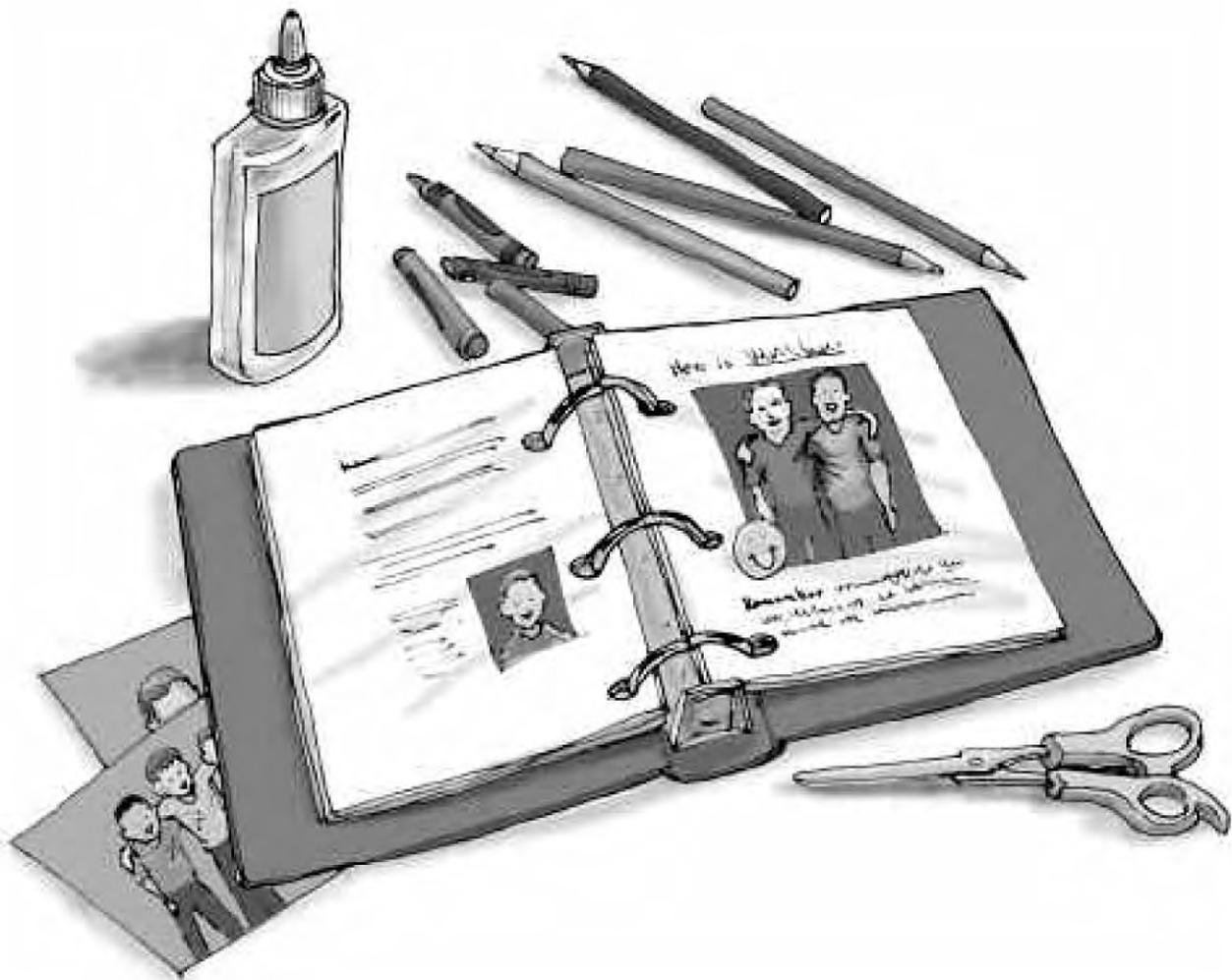
Memory Books

Memory books are a great tool to help students express their feelings and deal with their loss. On the following pages, you will find instructions and a template to help them memorialize their friend or loved one in a memory book.

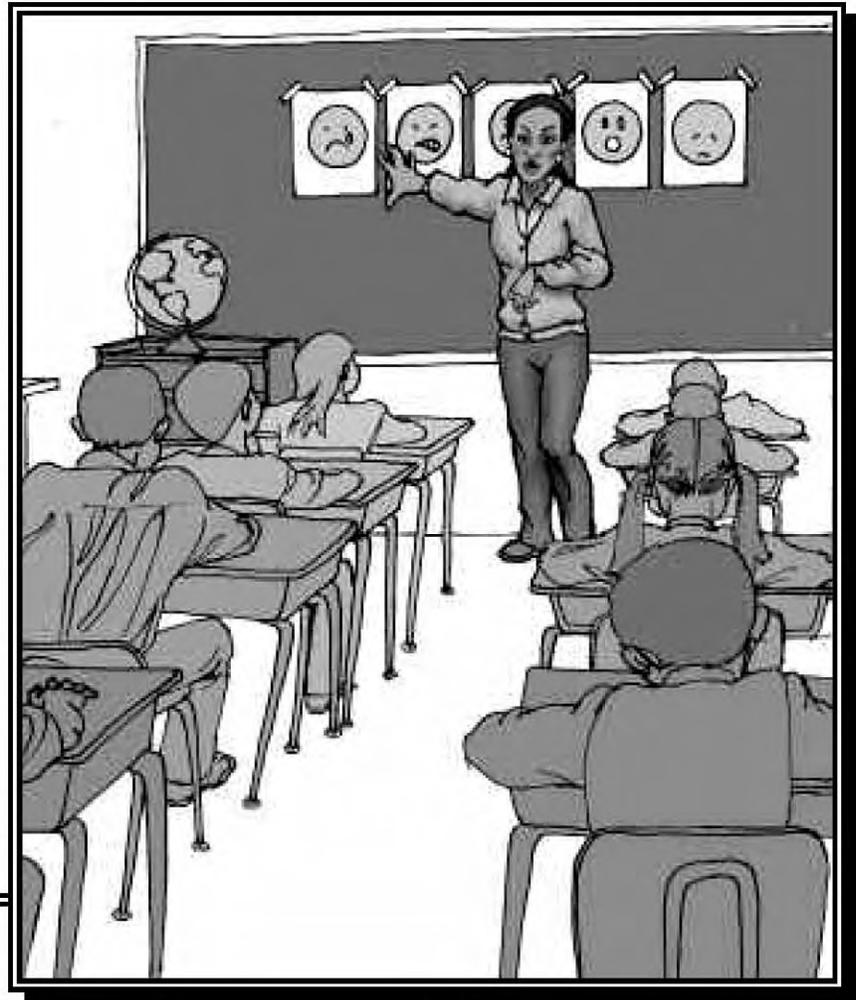
Getting Started: Instructions for students

Memory books can be an important way to share your feelings with others about the person who died. Choose items from the following pages to create your own memory book. You may want to use lots of colored pencils, crayons, and markers to make your book colorful. Stickers, tissue paper, and cardboard cutouts can also be helpful. You may want to put the pages in a special binder or create a cover yourself.

After completing your memory book, be sure to share it with others!



The counselor told us that our sad feelings may last quite awhile. She said that it is okay for us to cry.



She said that we may feel angry at school. Keeping anger inside could cause us to break school rules.

How are you feeling?

Who else could you talk to? (Circle your answers)



Talking to others sure
helps you feel better!

Seeds of Hope

Death is part of life. Just as a person, plant, or animal is born; we know that a time will come for all living things to die. It can help us feel better to watch a plant grow and be reminded about how special life is.

Grow a plant!

You will need:

-  A small pot or styrofoam cup
-  Potting soil
-  Plant seeds
-  Water

Be sure to water your plant weekly. Watch your plant grow!

