



# OURHOUSE

GRIEF SUPPORT CENTER

Supporting Grieving Children and Teens

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**CLINICAL DIRECTOR OF THE CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS**

**OUR HOUSE GRIEF SUPPORT CENTER**

# OUR HOUSE Grief Support Center

- The largest grief support center in California
- Nonsectarian, nonprofit, free-standing
- Volunteer driven

## OUR HOUSE GRIEF SUPPORT CENTER'S CORE BELIEFS;

- ▶ GRIEF IS A NATURAL REACTION
- ▶ GRIEF IS UNIQUE IN DURATION AND INTENSITY
- ▶ HELPS TO SHARE GRIEF WITH OTHERS
- ▶ NOBODY SHOULD HAVE TO GRIEVE ALONE

# Overview of Services

- ▶ GRIEF SUPPORT GROUPS FOR ADULTS & CHILDREN
  - ▶ WEST LOS ANGELES, WOODLAND HILLS AND VIRTUAL
  - ▶ ADULT GROUPS OFFERED BOTH IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH
- ▶ CAMP ERIN LOS ANGELES
- ▶ SCHOOL BASED SUPPORT GROUPS
- ▶ GRIEF WORKSHOPS
- ▶ PROFESSIONAL TRAININGS
- ▶ MEDIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM
- ▶ ON SIGHT GRIEF RESPONSE
- ▶ GRIEF REFERRALS AND RESOURCES

# Agenda



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1. Grief as Taboo

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2. One Last Hug... Three days at grief camp

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3. "When can we find grandma?" Understanding children's grief from a developmental perspective

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4. J William Worden Tasks of Mourning

# CBEM

Powered By

*judi's house* JAG Institute  
For Supporting Children and Families



NEW YORK LIFE  
FOUNDATION

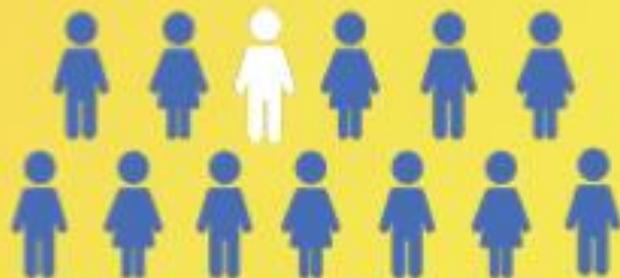


# California Report 2025

Childhood bereavement is a critical issue and an increasingly important national priority.

The Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model® (CBEM)<sup>1</sup> approximates rates of bereavement for U.S. youth. Results from the CBEM are updated annually using vital statistics<sup>2</sup> from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.\* The 2025 report reflects 2019 to 2023 data, the five most recent years available.

# 1 in 13



California children will experience the death of a **parent or sibling** by age 18

## 7.6% ~ 659K

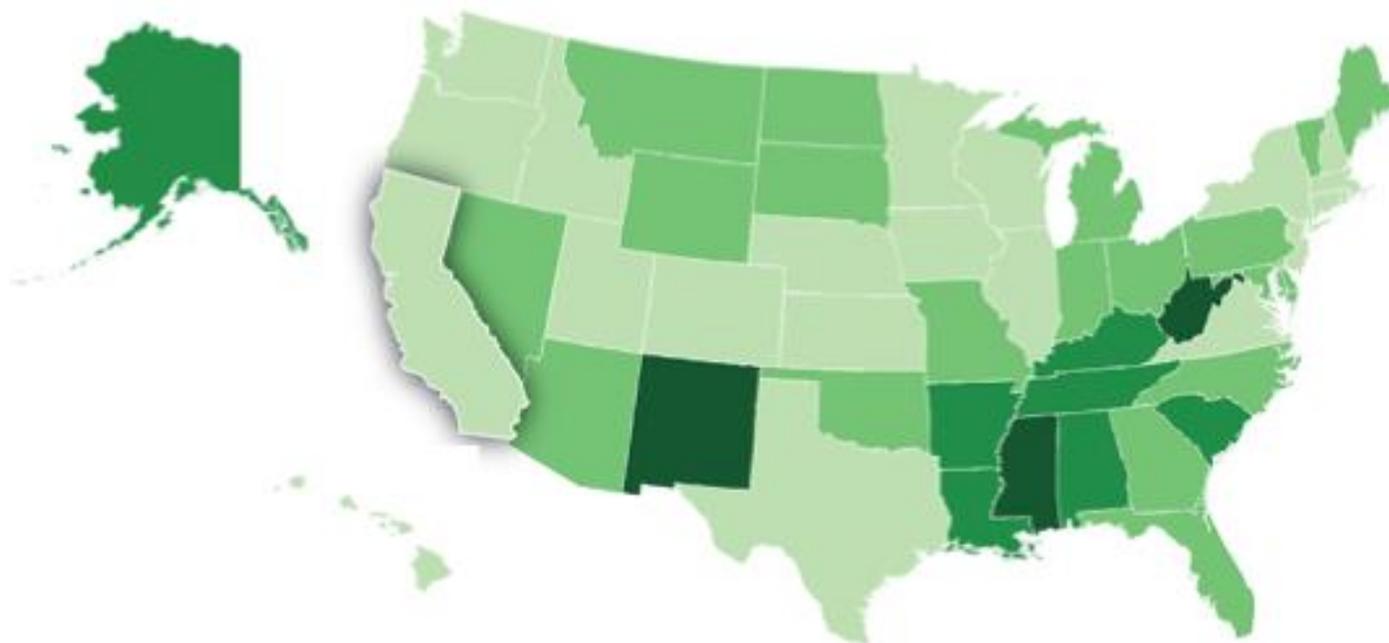
children will be bereaved by age 18  
**LOWER** than national rate of 8.9%

## & MORE THAN DOUBLES

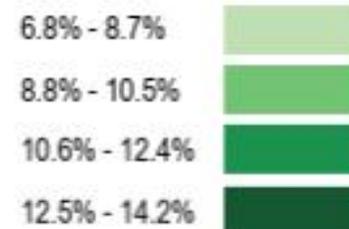
## 1.6M

youth will be bereaved by age 25

## Childhood Bereavement Rates by State†



### KEY

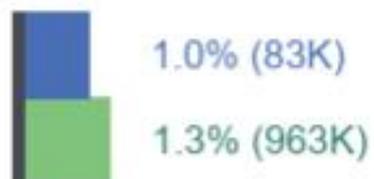


†Bereavement due to parent or sibling death by age 18.

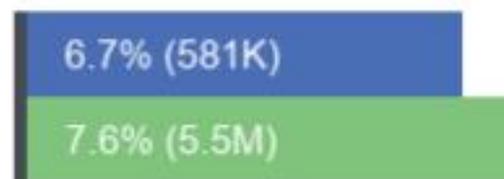
## Relationship to the Deceased

The CBEM provides independent estimates of the percentage and number of youth ages 0-17 who will experience the death of a parent or sibling.

### Sibling



### Parent



## CBEM Leading Cause of Death

The CBEM can produce bereavement estimates by cause of death. The tables below reflect the percentages of all **bereaved** children who will experience bereavement due to the leading causes of death for youth and adults, respectively.

### Death of a Sibling (Ages 0 - 17)

Cause of Death	Percentage of Bereaved Children <sup>‡</sup>
Conditions Related to Birth	30.7%
Birth Defects	16.3%
Accidents	14.8%
Cancer	5.7%
Homicide	4.3%

### Death of a Parent (Ages 29 - 48)

Cause of Death	Percentage of Bereaved Children <sup>‡</sup>
Accidents	30.1%
Cancer	13.2%
Heart Disease	9.8%
Suicide	6.8%
COVID-19	6.4%

<sup>‡</sup>The percentage of bereaved children for a specific cause of death is calculated by dividing the number of children who will experience bereavement due to that cause by the number of all bereaved children.

## Cost of Inaction

The death of a parent, sibling, or other important person in a child's life is one of the most frequently reported disruptive childhood experiences<sup>3</sup> and without appropriate support, can adversely affect lifelong health and well-being.<sup>4</sup> The findings below represent research about the impact of bereavement in the U.S. and abroad.



**97%**  
of teachers

believe grief adversely impacts learning.<sup>5</sup>



Bereaved children are  
**2x** MORE  
LIKELY

to experience significant challenges at home.<sup>6</sup>



**1 in 4**  
youth

who die by suicide were bereaved.<sup>7</sup>



Bereaved youth are  
**175%** MORE  
LIKELY

to develop Substance Use Disorder in adulthood.<sup>8</sup>

# What is grief

- ▶ Thoughts, feelings and behaviors when someone close to us dies
  - ▶ Natural reaction to a life cycle event
  - ▶ World Events: COVID 19
  - ▶ Local Tragedy: LA Wildfires

# What is grief

1

## Non-Death Loss:

A person can grieve the loss of anything significant to their physical, psychological, spiritual, and interpersonal lives. Throughout a person's life, they will experience many non-death losses. Some will feel minor and manageable—while other losses feel devastating and life-altering.



WHAT'S YOUR GRIEF

2

## Secondary Loss:

After experiencing a devastating loss, grieving people are often surprised to find there is a ripple effect of subsequent losses. The primary loss causes such significant shifts and fractures that there is a domino effect of losses related to things like finances, friends, community, worldview, faith, sense-of-self, and the list goes on.



WHAT'S YOUR GRIEF

## Ambiguous Loss

Ambiguous loss happens when you're grieving someone who is still living. It's different than the grief you experience when someone you love dies. That kind of loss is finite and certain, and there's no question you should feel pain. Ambiguous loss happens when something or someone profoundly changes or disappears. A person feels torn between hope things will return to normal and the looming sense that life as they knew it is fading away like a Polaroid developing in reverse.

3



WHAT'S YOUR GRIEF

# What is grief

## Cumulative Loss:

Cumulative loss refers to the experience of suffering a new loss before you have the chance to grieve a first loss, or suffering multiple losses in quick succession. It's important to note, grieving the death of a loved one is never really "done," and it's common for new losses to bring up memories and emotions about past losses. So some amount of cumulative grief is almost always a given.

4



WHAT'S YOUR GRIEF

## Nonfinite Loss:



From childhood, people form ideas about how they think and hope their lives will turn out. People imagine, make choices, and work towards the future they think they want and, in some cases, need. But many things are out of one's control, and when someone doesn't have the child, partner, job, or life they want, they may experience nonfinite grief. Nonfinite grief is something a person may carry with them for a long time, as they struggle with the push and pull of trying to achieve their hopes and dreams but continually finding that life falls short of their expectations.

5

WHAT'S YOUR GRIEF

6

## Anticipatory Grief:

Anticipatory grief is grief that occurs before a potential loss. Any time circumstances lead a person to think that death is a real possibility, they may start to grieve aspects of the loss. Anticipatory grief doesn't mean that a person will grieve any less. It just may mean they process elements of the loss more slowly and overtime.



WHAT'S YOUR GRIEF

# What is grief

## Disenfranchised Grief

7

Disenfranchised grief is when a person feels denied the right to grieve by family, friends, community members, or society on the whole. When a loss is disenfranchised, it means the grieving person isn't getting the support or validation they need. This means different things to different people. Where one person only needs validation from themselves, another person may feel they need the acknowledgment of their entire family, community, or society. Regardless, the impact of disenfranchised grief is that the person experiencing it feels alienated, invalidated, ashamed, weak, etc.



WHAT'S YOUR GRIEF

# Prolonged Grief Disorder

13

DSM: Diagnosis of PGD requires the presence of at least one core symptom (below) for 1 year or longer in adults, and 6 months or longer in children, following the death of a close family member or friend

Persistent yearning or longing for the deceased

Intense sorrow and emotional pain in response to the death

Preoccupation with the deceased

Preoccupation with the circumstances of the death

Present in a clinically significant way, nearly every day, for at least the last month

# Grief As Taboo

How does it feel....

Being present at a birth or  
visiting new parents?

Being present at funeral or  
memorial service?

Life cycle events: Born vs. Died

**BLISS** By Harry Bliss

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"I don't know how to tell you this, Honey,  
so I'm going to come right out and say it. ...  
Your goldfish ran away."

# Euphemisms for died...

Lost

In A Better Place

No Longer With Us

Gone to  
Heaven

Gone to Sleep

# Grief Vs. Mourning

## **Grief:**

The internal  
experience of loss

Universal

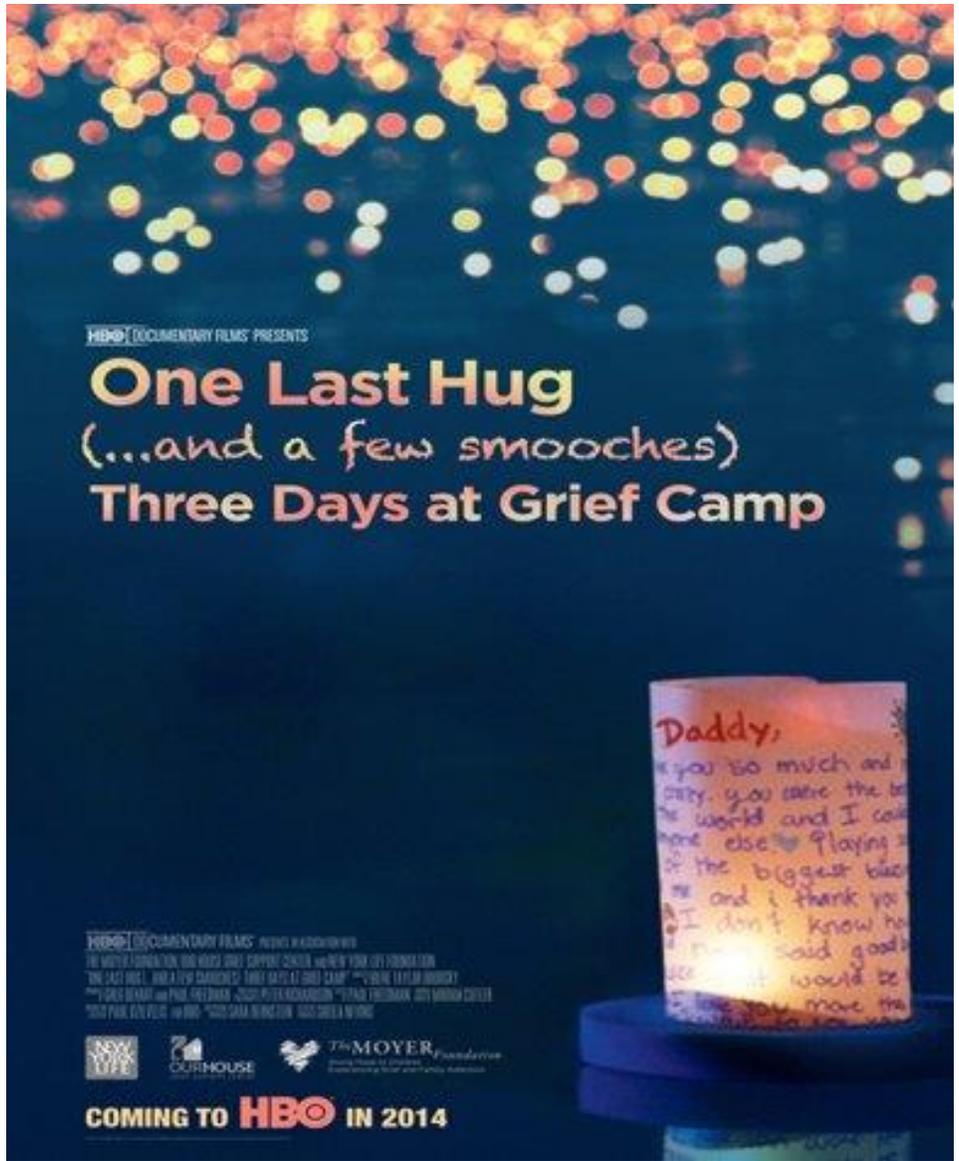
## **Mourning:**

The external process  
of grief, expressed  
outwardly  
experience of loss

Varies

The background is a dark blue gradient with a pattern of stylized, light blue human figures in various poses, some with arms raised. A solid yellow rectangle is positioned in the top right corner.

# Individual and collective grief



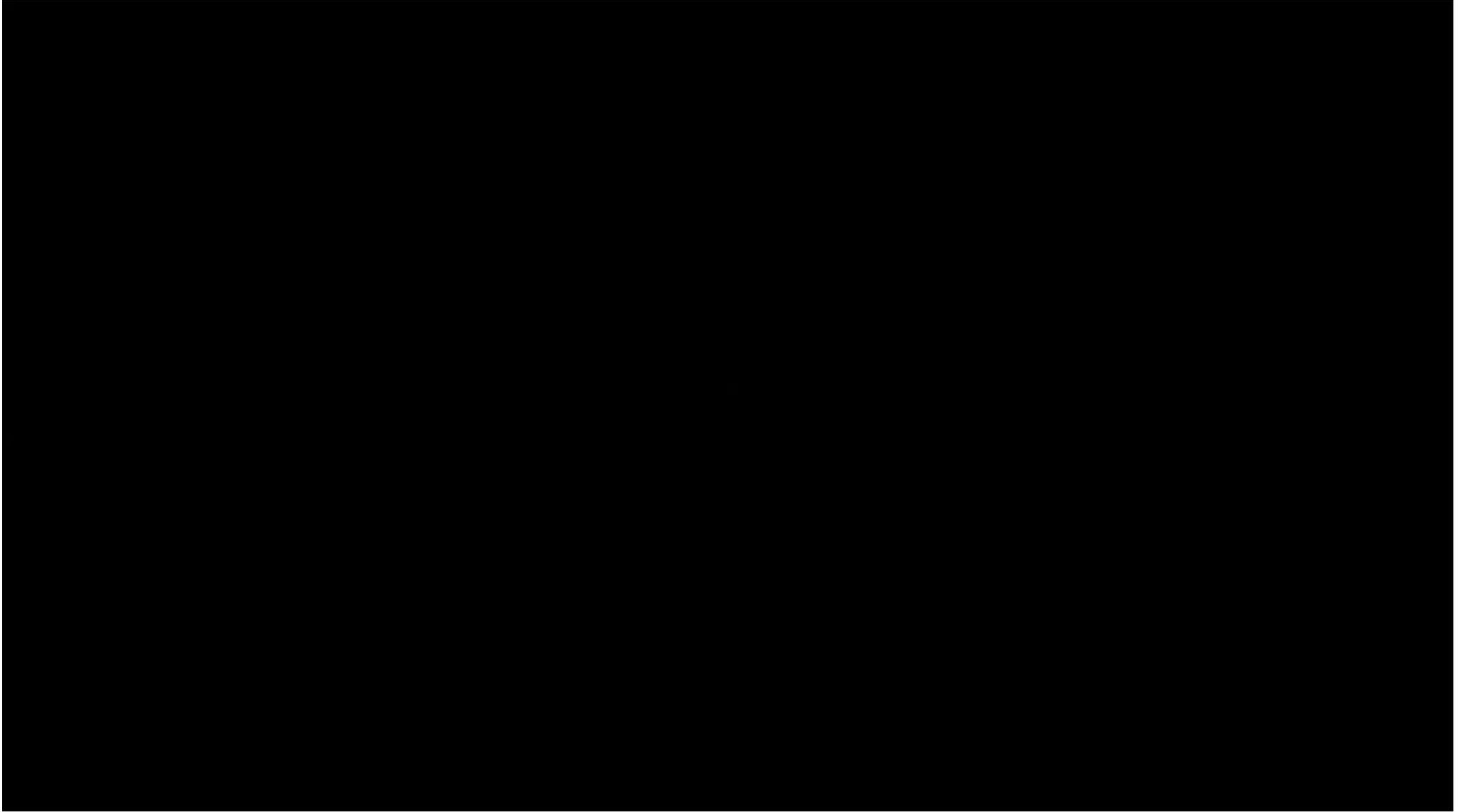
HBO DOCUMENTARY FILMS PRESENTS

# One Last Hug (...and a few smooches) Three Days at Grief Camp

HBO DOCUMENTARY FILMS PRESENTS  
THE NYU FOUNDATION AND HOUSING AND SUPPORT CENTER AND NYU GRIEF FOUNDATION  
ONE LAST HUG (...AND A FEW SMOOCHES) THREE DAYS AT GRIEF CAMP  
\*\*VIDEO BEHAVIOR AND PAUL FREEDMAN, \*\*JOHN PETER RICHARDSON, \*\*STAN FRIEDMAN, AND MARIAN COOPER  
\*\*NYU PARK, \*\*NYU FOUNDATION, \*\*NYU GRIEF FOUNDATION, \*\*NYU HOUSING AND SUPPORT CENTER

   **THE MOYER** Foundation  
Giving People A Chance To Live A Better Life

COMING TO **HBO** IN 2014



# Toddlers & Preschool Preoperational

- ▶ Magical Thinking makes it impossible to understand death
- ▶ May regress to earlier stages of development
- ▶ Ego-centric, believing the death is their fault
- ▶ Cognitively unable to understand death related concepts:
  - ▶ Irreversible
  - ▶ Unpredictable
  - ▶ Universal
  - ▶ Causality leads to non-functionality





# School Aged Concrete Operational

- ▶ Concrete thinkers
- ▶ Death is permanent
- ▶ Somaticize or “act it out” their grief
- ▶ May not look like they’re grieving “short sadness span” (Nancy Boyd Webb)
  - ▶ Can’t tolerate intensity, needs breaks to play

# Pre-adolescents and Teens

## Formal Operational

- ▶ Lack emotional maturity to process grief like adults
- ▶ Ego-centric; self-blame
- ▶ Magical thinkers - Cope in ways that can be dangerous
- ▶ May take on adult roles/worries
- ▶ Identity vs. Role Confusion (Erickson)
- ▶ Separation – Individuation Process impacted



# Tonkin's Model of Grief

Growing around grief

Your life



Time



To accept the reality of the loss.

**TASK #1**



**TASK #2**

To process the pain of the grief.

To adjust to a world without the deceased.

**TASK #3**



**TASK #4**

To find an enduring connection with the deceased while embarking on a new life.

Reference:

Worden, W. (2009). Grief Counselling and Grief Therapy - A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner. New York, USA: Springer Publishing Company.

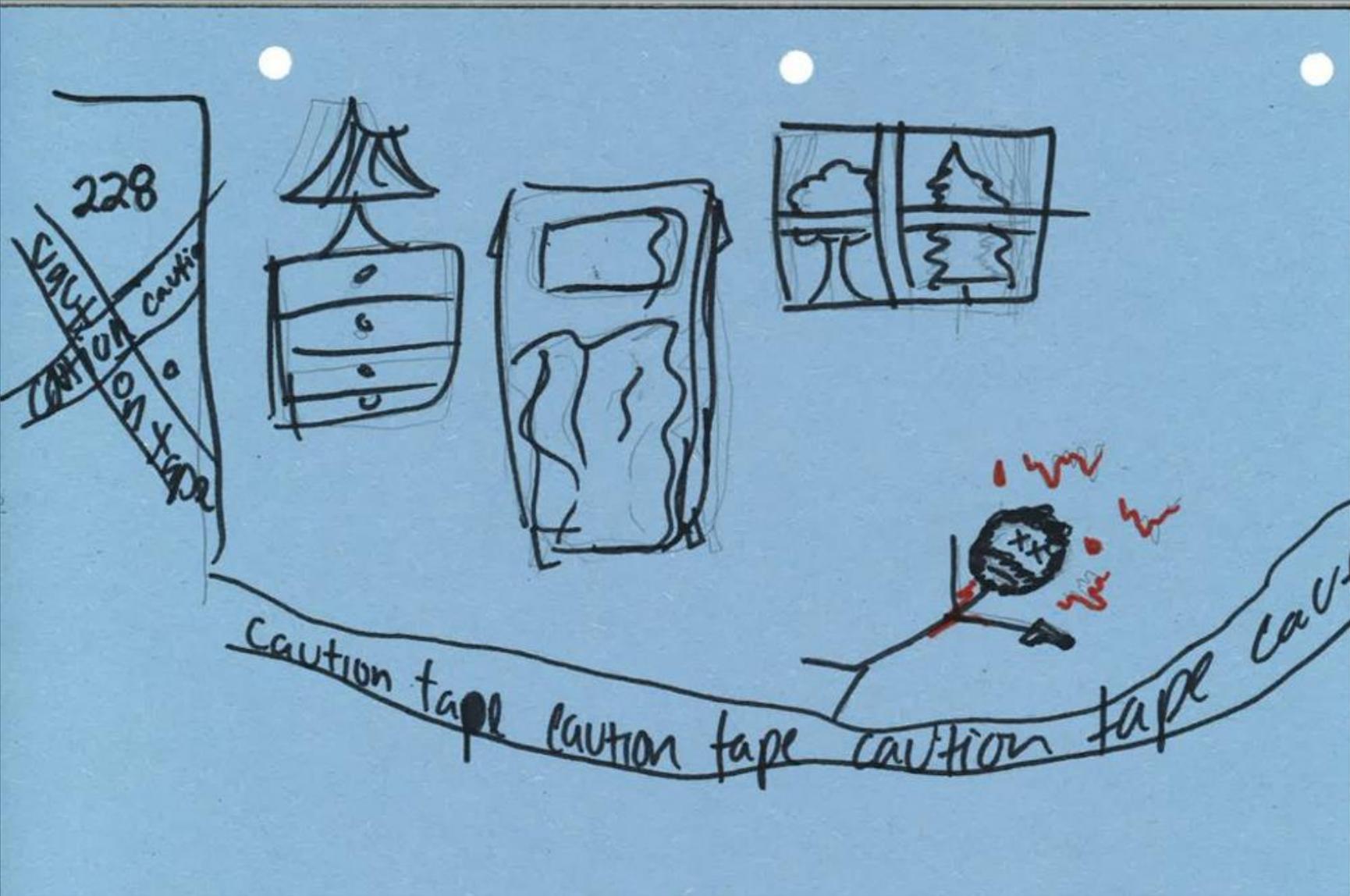


# J William Worden: Tasks of Mourning

# Goal #1 Help Children Understand What Happened



# Goal #1 Help Children Understand What Happened



Where is your person now?



# Help Children Tell Their Story

## **Stigmatized Deaths:**

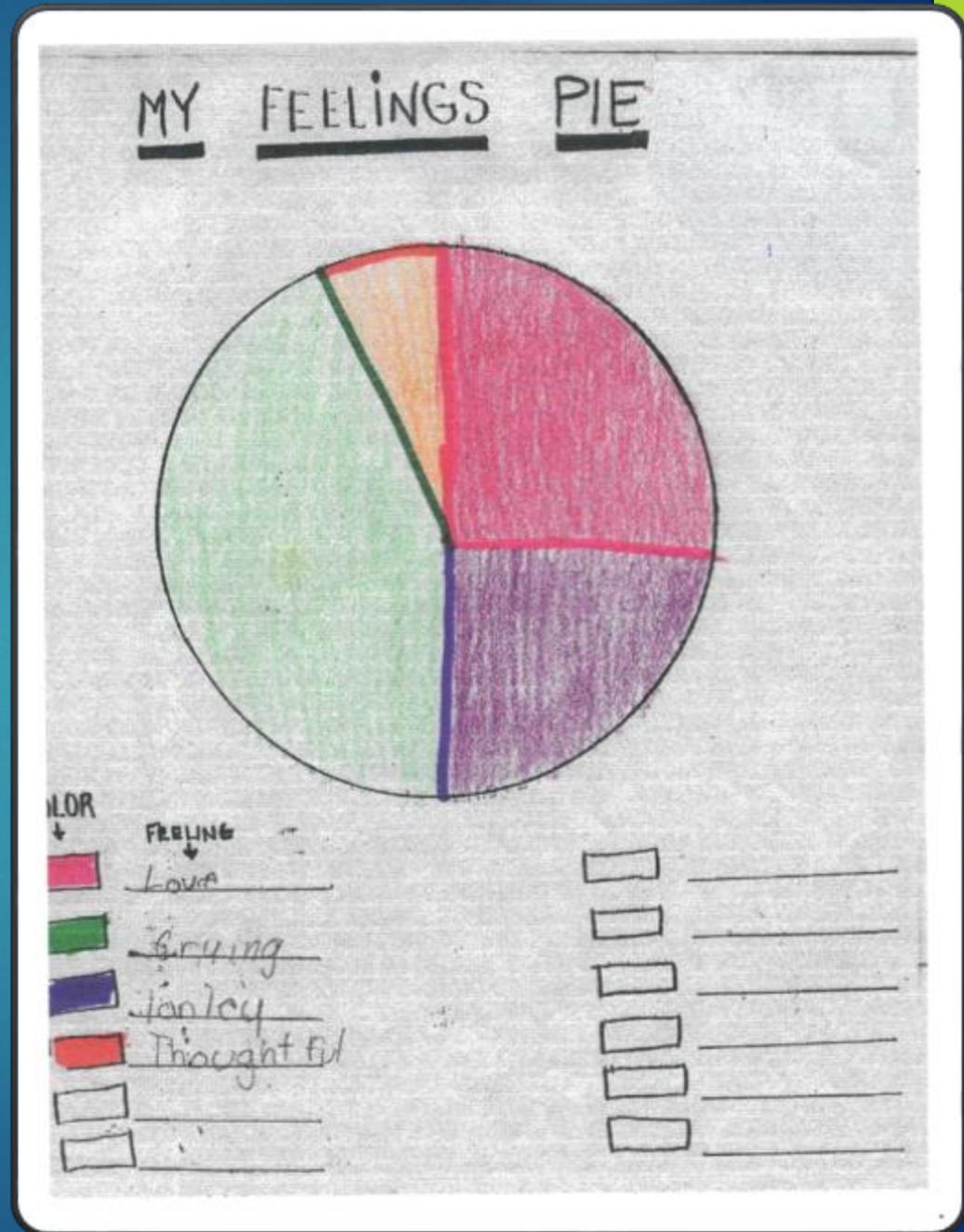
- When the death is a suicide
- When the death is due to homicide
- When the death is substance-related

## **Grief & Trauma**

- The subjective experience of trauma
- Indicators they are not ready for a group setting



# Processing the pain of the grief



# Fear & Worry

That they will die

That other people in their life will die

The surviving parent needs to be taken care of

Their *sense of safety* in the world has been broken

World event impact: COVID / Wildfires

Sit with their feeling and be truthful to help with their fears:

“What happened to your mommy was unfair, it was the worst thing that can happen, but most people live until they are very old...”

\*Who would care for them if their surviving guardian was unable to?\*

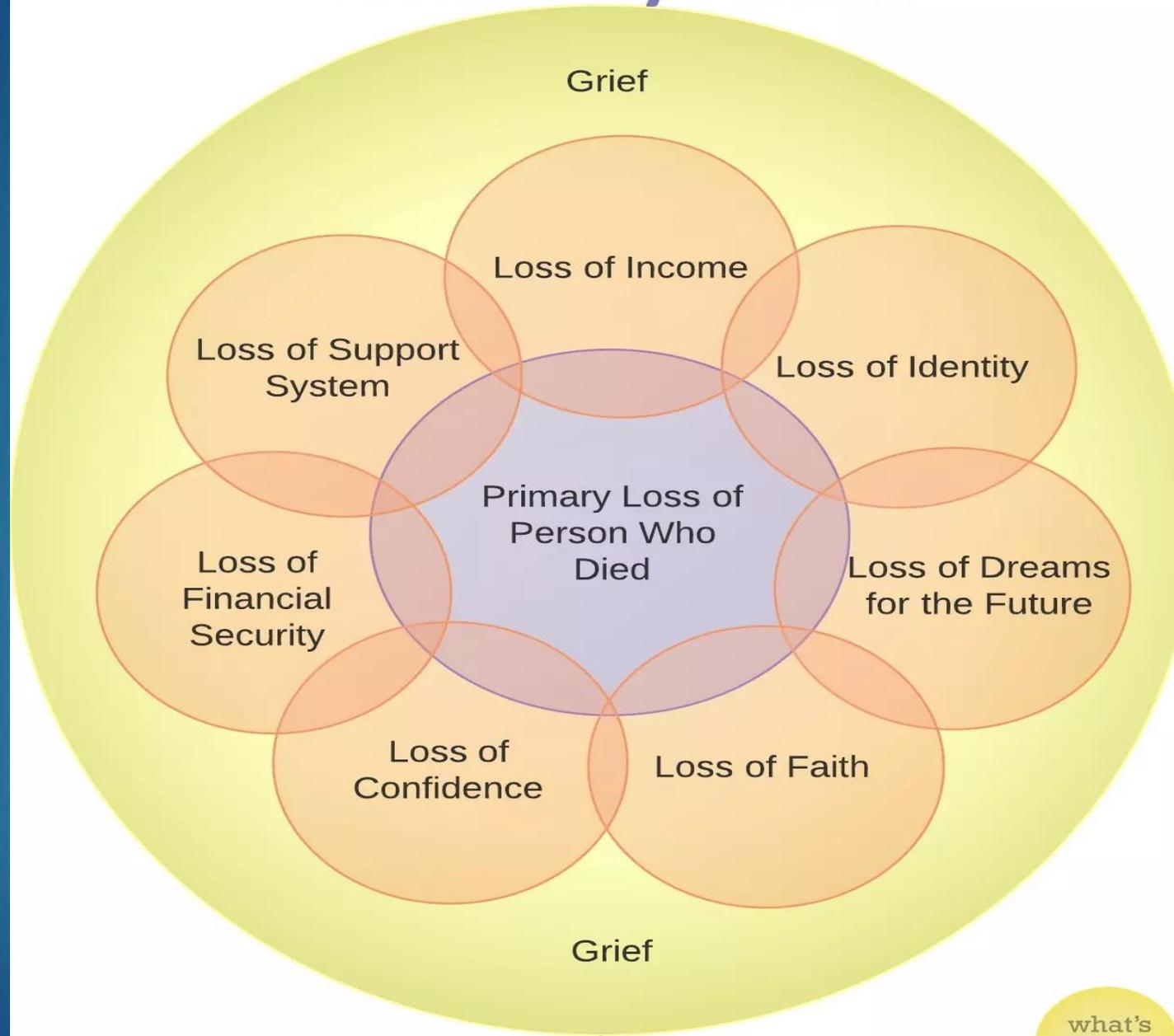
# Goal #3 Help Children Get Their Needs Met

**What needs did that person  
help fill for the child?**

**What else has changed for  
the child since their person  
died?**



# Secondary Losses



#4 Help Children find ways to memorialize  
and stay connected





False expectation to find “closure”

Grief doesn't magically go away with “closure”.... It changes and evolves over time, feeling lighter and easier to manage

# RECENT RESEARCH ON CHILDHOOD BEREAVEMENT

10-25% of kids at risk for maladaptive grief (Kaplow 2021)

Risk of psychiatric problems increases in proportion to the # of aces

Bottom line: most kids are resilient 90-95% will experience normative grief (COVID Collaborative Ad Council, 2021).



# Contact Info

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- ▶ Direct line: 424-220-6634

Our House intake line to share with families in need of support:

- ▶ 310-473-1511