



 MHTTC  
*Grief Sensitivity  
Virtual Learning Institute*

A two-part series for those supporting individuals experiencing grief and loss during COVID-19 and beyond

 [bit.ly/mhttc-grief-sensitivity-training](https://bit.ly/mhttc-grief-sensitivity-training)

**Recordings for each session will be made available on our website:**

**<https://bit.ly/mhttc-grief-sensitivity-training>**



**MHTTC**

**Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network**  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

# **Grief Sensitivity Virtual Learning Institute: Beyond “Sorry for Your Loss:” Supporting Students on Their Grief Journey (Part 2)**

Thursday, November 12, 2020

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**Rozlyn Kwong, LMFT**

*Clinical Trainer and EBP Coordinator*

**Alejandra Torres, LMFT**




*Clinician*

**Vannia Duran, ASW**

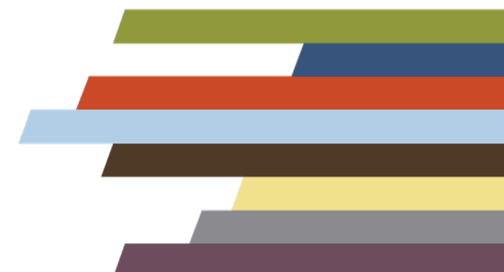
*Clinician*



# Housekeeping Items

- We have made every attempt to make today's presentation secure. If we need to end the presentation unexpectedly, we will follow-up using your registration information.
- All attendees are muted and cannot share video.
- Have a question for the presenters? Use the Q&A
- Have a comment or link for all attendees? Use the Chat
- At the end of today's training please complete a **brief** survey about today's training.
- You will receive an email on how to access a certificate of attendance; must attend at least half of the session.
- This event is closed captioned! 
- Follow us on social media   @MHTTCNetwork

**Please Note:**  
**Session recording and slide deck will be posted on our website within a week.**



# Additional Information on Grief

## Fact Sheets

- We have a series of fact sheets focused on addressing various grief-related topics
  - [Defining Grief](#)
  - [Responses to Grief Across the Lifespan](#)
  - [Preventive Strategies and Protective Factors](#)
  - [Cultural Responsiveness](#)
  - [Evidence-Based Treatments for Grief](#)

## Webpage

- *Responding to COVID-19: Grief, Loss, and Bereavement* - visit our webpage for events and resources
- <https://mhttcnetwork.org/centers/global-mhttc/responding-covid-19-grief-loss-and-bereavement>





# Grief and Self-Care

- Be sensitive to your own grief and reactions throughout the Learning Institute. Take breaks, stretch, drink lots of water...
- **Helplines and Support**
  - **National Suicide Hotline** - 1-800-273-8255
  - **NAMI** - 1-800-950-NAMI (6264) or [info@nami.org](mailto:info@nami.org)
  - **Mental Health America**- 1-800-273-TALK (8255), text MHA to 741741
  - **SAMHSA's National Helpline** - referral and information - 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
  - **SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline** - 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746

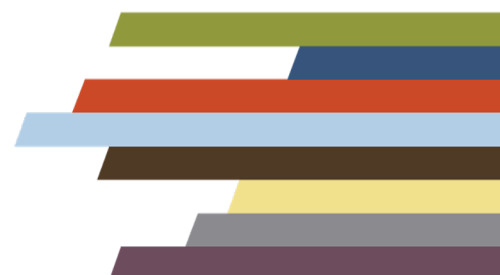




MHTTC

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- The MHTTC Network accelerates the adoption and implementation of mental health related evidence-based practices across the nation
  - Develops and disseminates resources
  - Provides free local and regional training and technical assistance
  - Heightens the awareness, knowledge, and skills of the mental health workforce
- 10 Regional Centers, a National American Indian & Alaska Native Center, a National Hispanic & Latino Center, and a Network Coordinating Office
- [www.mhttcnetwork.org](http://www.mhttcnetwork.org)

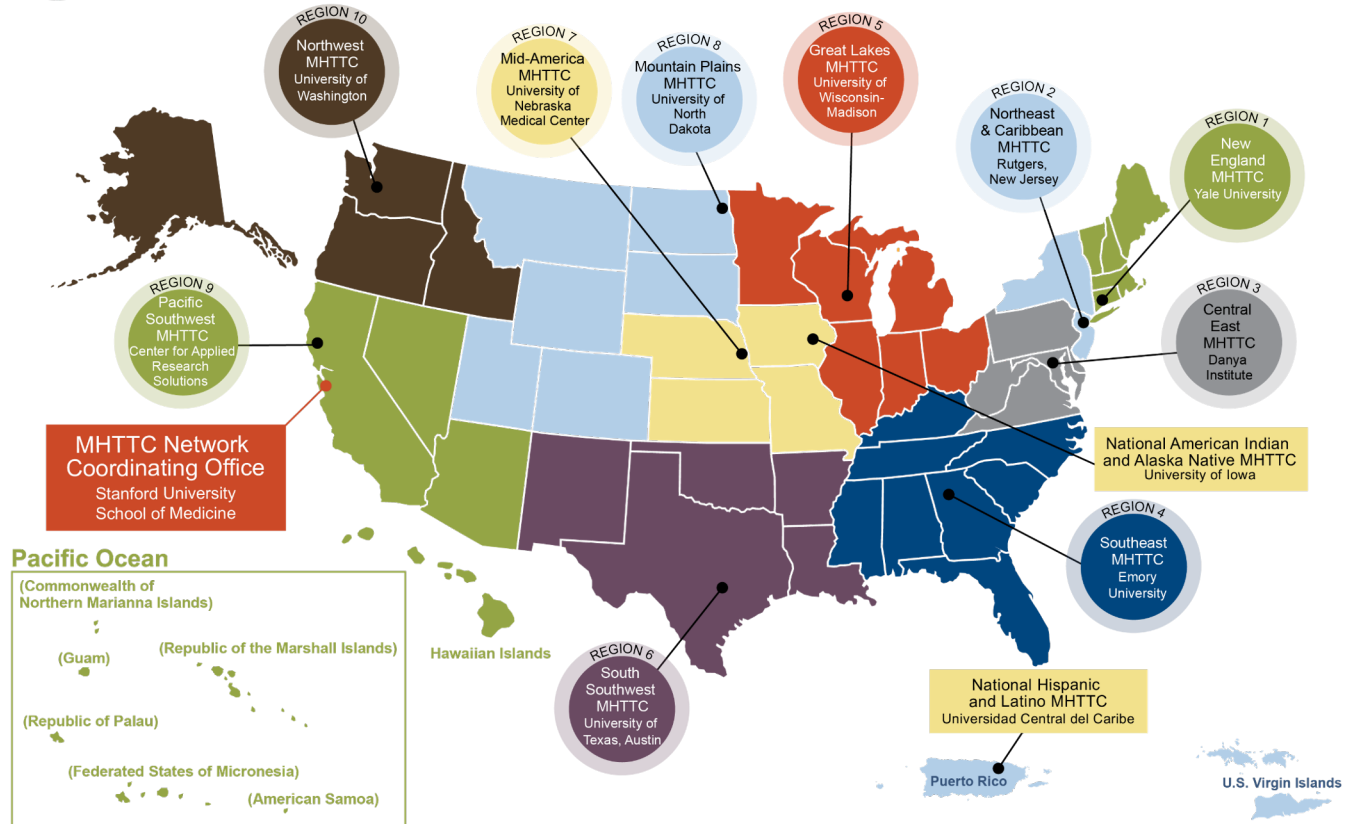


# Connect with Your MHTTC at [www.mhttcnetwork.org](http://www.mhttcnetwork.org)



**MHTTC** Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network  
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**MHTTC Network**



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# **Grief Sensitivity Virtual Learning Institute: Beyond “Sorry for Your Loss:” Supporting Students on Their Grief Journey (Part 2)**

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# Presenters



**Rozlyn Kwong** is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and is currently the Clinical Trainer and Evidenced-Based Practice Coordinator at Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services, a multi-service agency which provides services to children, youth, young adults and adults in the Los Angeles County. At Hathaway Sycamores, the largest program is school-based services where they have mental health providers on school campuses providing services to students and families. Rozlyn holds multiple certifications to provide treatment, supervision or training in different Evidenced-Based Practices including Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), Seeking Safety, Positive Parenting Program (Triple-P), Managing and Adapting Practices (MAP), and Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) for Traumatized Children. She has also completed many trainings specifically in the topic of grief treatment, including Childhood Traumatic Grief (CTG) Treatment, a model using TF-CBT to treat childhood traumatic grief.



**Alejandra Torres** is a bilingual licensed marriage and family therapist from Los Angeles, California. Alejandra works for Hathaway-Sycamores providing services for school-aged children and their families. Alejandra specializes in trauma and the treatment of young children from birth to five dealing with a range of experiences including domestic violence, abuse, and grief.



**Vannia Duran** is a Clinician for Hathaway Sycamores in Covina working with children and families. She got her Bachelor of Science in Cognitive Science with Emphasis in Clinical Aspects of Cognition at UCSD and her Master of Social Work at USC. Vannia also has experience working with children and adults with developmental disabilities as well as adults with serious mental illness.



*MHTTC GRIEF SENSITIVE VIRTUAL LEARNING INSTITUTE:*

# BEYOND “SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS”: SUPPORTING STUDENTS ON THEIR GRIEF JOURNEY PART 2

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Rozlyn Kwong, LMFT

*Clinical Trainer and EBP Coordinator*

Alejandra Torres, LMFT

*Clinician*

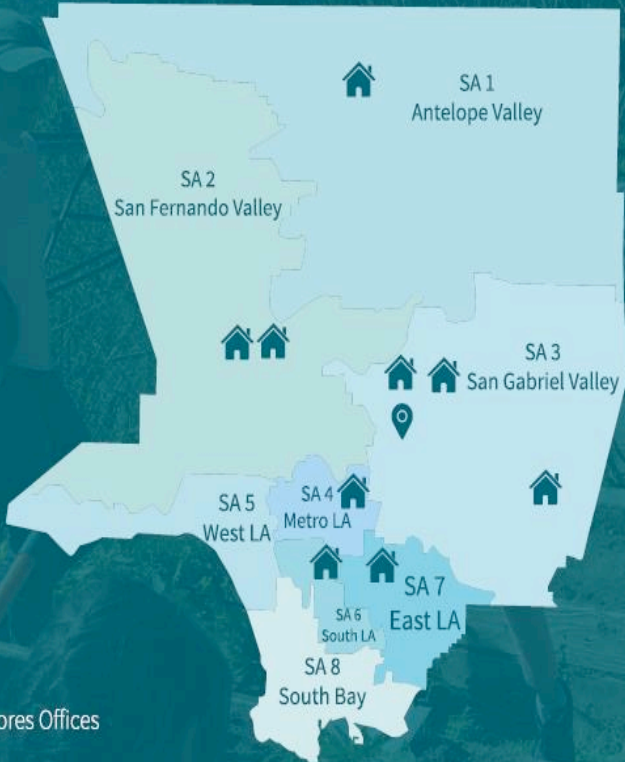
Vannia Duran, ASW

*Clinician*





## Where We Serve



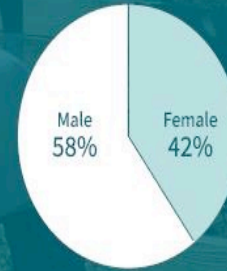
= Hathaway-Sycamores Offices  
 = Hathaway-Sycamores Headquarters

## Who We Impact

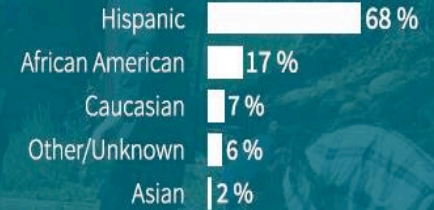
More than **15,000** children, young adults and families impacted and **334,138** services delivered



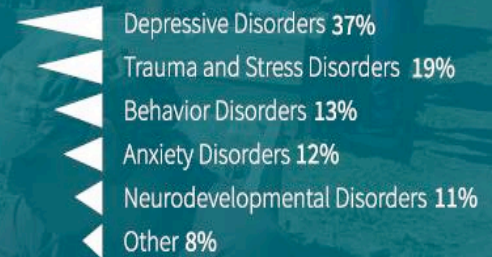
### Gender



### Ethnicity



### Clinical Areas Treated



### Age Range



## Who We Are



**680** Dedicated staff  
**399** Helpful volunteers



**46** Community members trained in Mental Health First Aid and Applied Suicide Intervention Training



**908** Professionals trained in Clinical and Evidence-Based Practice Trainings



# Learning Objectives

- Describe common barriers in communicating empathy to students who are grieving.
- Identify provider's own barriers in communicating empathy. Explain ways to overcome those barriers.
- Demonstrate therapeutic interventions to communicate empathy and to support students who are grieving.

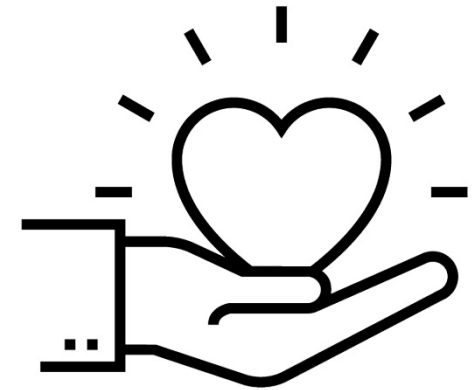
# Part 1



- Grief is a **process**: We look at grief as a natural response to loss instead of a condition to be fixed.
- Grief is exacerbated during COVID.
- Communicating empathy is important when supporting someone on their grief journey.
- There are general grief indicators, but everyone's experience of grief is unique.
- Supporting a student on their grieving journey includes establishing a sense of safety, dealing with emotions, making sense of the loss, and living with the loss beyond the loss.
- **Poll: Self-Assessment – “Since the last time we met in September, have you had to support students on their grief journey? How many?”**

# Communicating Empathy **In-Action**

- Why is “Empathy” so important for someone who is grieving?
- Communication of compassion and acceptance
  - Giving / seeking permission and validating
  - Using a “Discovery” approach
  - Communicating that I am on this journey with you



Empathy

# Common Barriers to Empathic Communication



## Lack of Skills

- “I don’t know how to”
- “What if I say the wrong thing?”
- “What if they cry?” (What do I do then?)



## Insufficient Time

- “It takes too much time”
- “I don’t have time for this”
- “What if they cry?” (How do I keep the conversation short?)

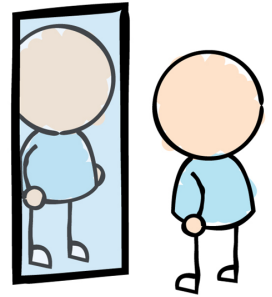
## Internal Distraction / Judgement

- “I have too many thoughts / feelings that it’s hard to be present”
- “What if they cry?” (What if... What if...?)

## Our Own Grief

- “It is too draining...”
- “I am already being empathic toward too many people”
- “What if they cry? (Why do I feel like crying too?)”

# My Own Barriers - Reflective Moment



- How confident do I feel about my ability to be empathic?

Lack of Skills

- Do I constantly feel like I am rushing from one thing to the next?

Insufficient Time

- What is getting in the way of me being present for the student?

Internal Distraction

- Have I honored my own grieving process? Is it possible that it is getting in the way?

My Own Grief

- Poll: Self-Assessment – *“In what category would the biggest barrier for you be?”*

## The First Year

The Month begins and I start to feel a tightness in the air around me.  
My movements lag.  
I slump.  
But this Month doesn't mean anything.  
What is "time," really?  
It means nothing.  
And I'm okay.

The days start to pass and I see The First Year fast approaching.  
But I'm moving slower now.  
My OCD acts up like fire that found a nest of dead foliage.  
I bet when The First Year comes it will be just like last month.  
What's the difference?  
It won't mean anything.  
And I'll be fine.

It's a few days before The First Year.  
It's not The First Year, but it's the day we knew the end was coming.  
I drove home from work, but I can't get out of my car.  
I stay parked for a half an hour.  
I'm staring forward.  
I feel empty.  
Why does this mean something?

The First Year is here and I avoid all thoughts of it being The First Year.  
You see? It's just like any other day.  
Just as I've been telling myself.  
I had nothing to fear.  
Nothing.

Day One after The First Year  
and the exhaustion of pretending has caught up with me.

I cry...

I mourn...

...And I miss you.

# My Barriers and How I Overcome Them – *Vannia Duran, ACSW*





# My Barriers and How I Overcome Them – *Alejandra Torres, LMFT*

## THE RABBIT LISTENED

- Communicating empathy when you think you don't have the "right" words to say.



CORI DOERRFELD

# Overcoming Barriers

- Lack of Skills

- *How can I learn and practice more?*
- Skills to practice: Non-verbal, Verbal, Reflective listening and reflective statements, Open-ended Questions, Acknowledging, etc.
- Be mindful, but don't be paralyzed by the fear of saying the "wrong" thing.

- Insufficient Time

- *How do I slow down and honor the grieving process?*

- Internal Distraction / Judgement

- *How can I intentionally enter into a reflective space for me to be aware of my thoughts? Feelings? Judgement or biases?*

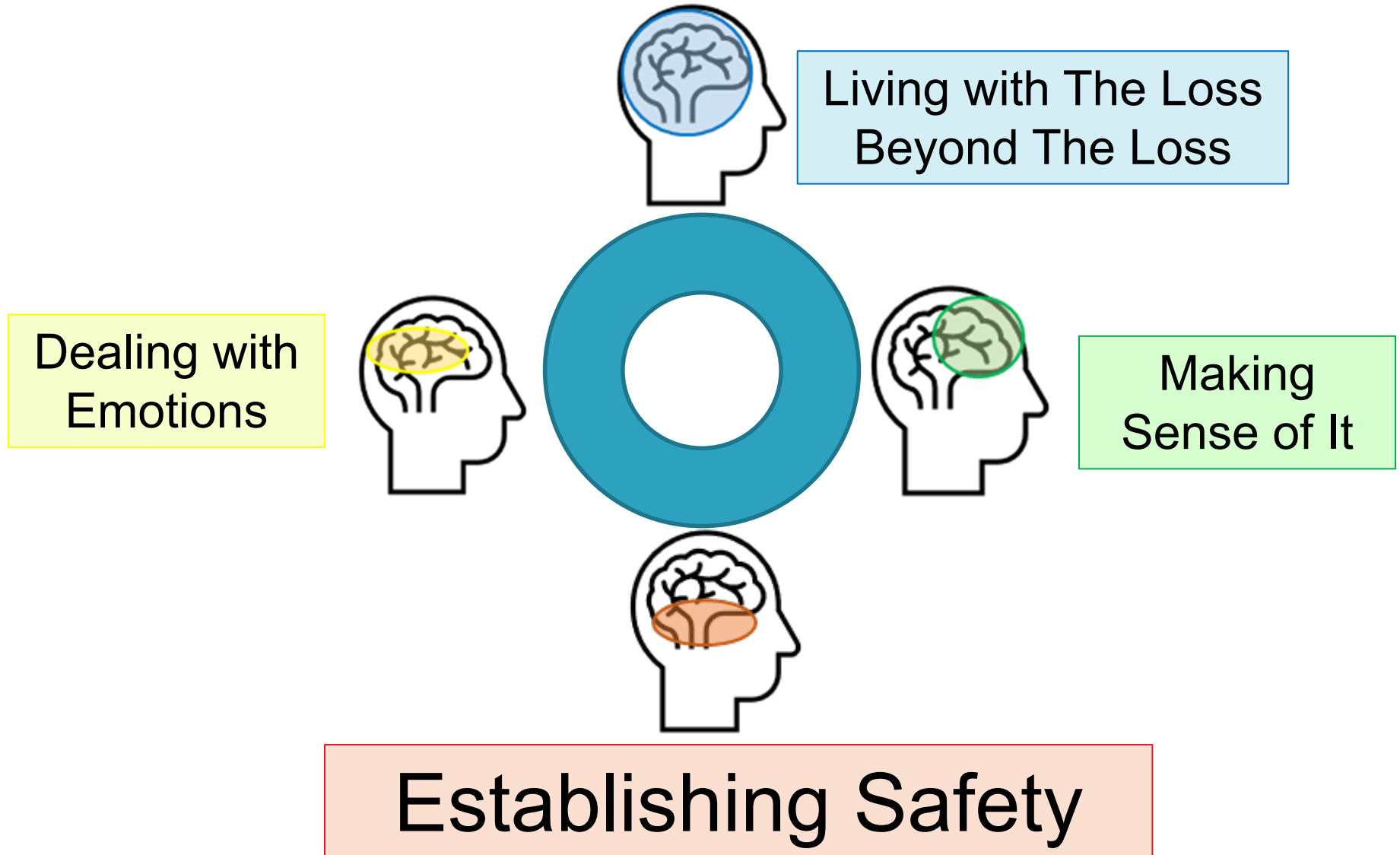
- My Own Grief

- *What is my relationship with my grief? Do I see it as a natural response to the loss(es) that I have experienced?*





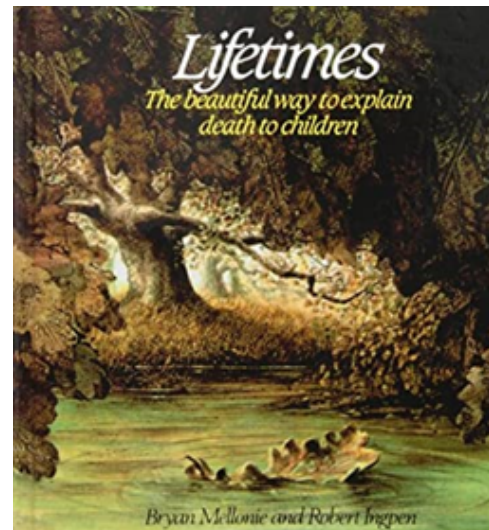
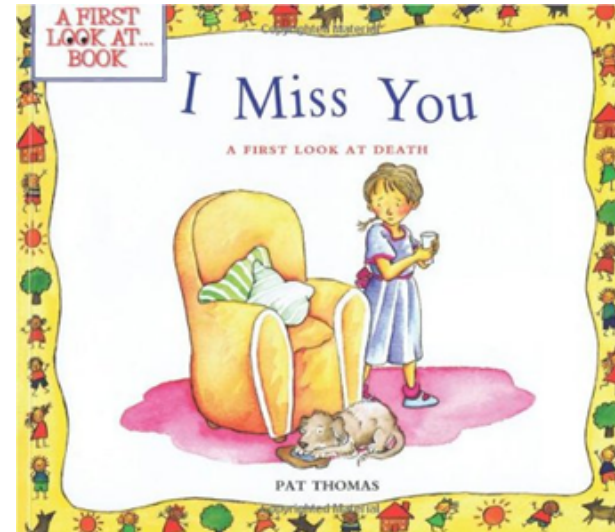
# Helping Students Grieve



# Helping Students Grieve



- Establishing Safety – *Review*
  - Giving permission
    - Normalizing discussion around death and the ambivalent feelings that come with grief.
  - Talking about death
    - Using clear language to describe death
  - Normalizing grief reactions, but acknowledging uniqueness of the grief



Sometimes, living things become ill or they get hurt. Mostly, of course, they get better again but there are times when they are so badly hurt or they are so ill that they die because they can no longer stay alive.

This can happen when they are young, or old, or anywhere in between.

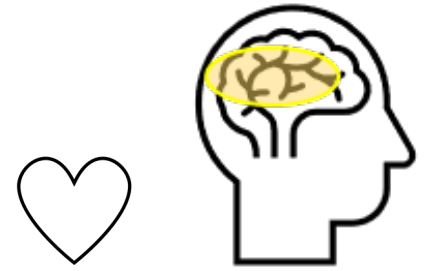
# Helping Students Grieve



- Establishing Safety **In-Action:**  
Case Example - B
- B and his mother learned that B's teacher died unexpectedly of a heart attack.
- B did not want to talk about his teacher or his death, despite the teacher being an important part in the family's lives.
- Spending time with B in "giving permission" to talk about death, talking about the grief process as something unique to each person.
- Using "In My Heart" Activity- Drawing or writing about memories of the loved one.



# Helping Students Grieve



- Dealing with the Emotions:  
*Review*
  - Identifying feelings
    - Feeling different feelings
  - Coping Strategies
    - Relaxation, Mindfulness, Breathing
    - If necessary, thought-stopping
  - Respecting how students grieve

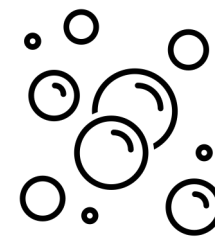
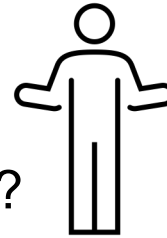


# Helping Students Grieve

## • Dealing with the Emotions **In-Action:**

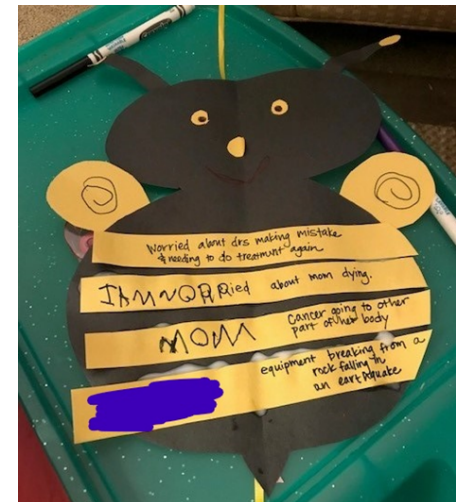
### • Identifying feelings

- Where do you feel it in your body?
- Feeling Heart / Feeling Pie



### • Coping Strategies

- Bubbles, Progressive Muscle Relaxation (Child version), Pop the Bag
- Worry Bee, Monster Spray, Party Hat Monster



### • Respecting how students grieve

- Garbage Can / Bag





# Helping Students Grieve



- Making sense of it: **Review**
  - Identifying distortions
  - Getting your needs met
    - Who is going to take care of me?
    - What about secondary losses?
  - Preparing for hard days
    - Collaboration with others in the student's life

# Helping Students Grieve



- Making sense of it **In-Action:**

- Identifying distortions
  - Best Friend Scenario example



- Getting your needs met
  - *Drawing: Before and After Pictures*

- Preparing for hard days
  - My Coping Box

**BEFORE**

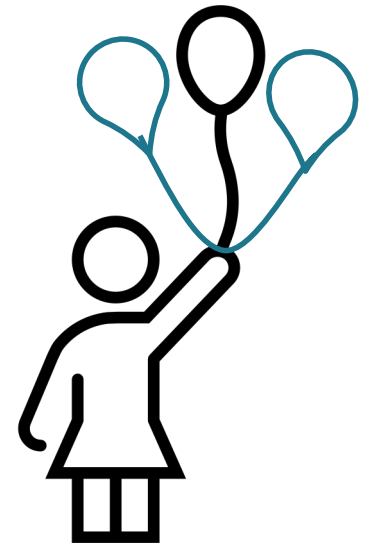
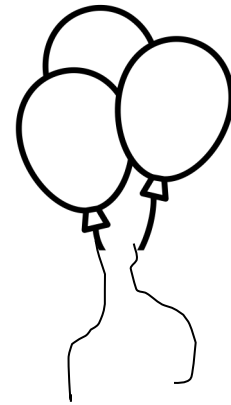


**AFTER**



# Helping Students Grieve

- Living with the loss beyond the loss: *Review*
  - Staying connected
  - Remembering...
    - Remembering doesn't always have to hurt!
  - Envisioning life without the person
    - Become more future-oriented over time





# Helping Students Grieve



- Living with the loss beyond the loss **In-Action:**
  - Nichos (Shadow Boxes)
  - Memory Box of Chocolates
  - Story-telling Art
  - Story-telling: Radio Broadcast
  - “In Memory Of” Flower



# Working with Caregivers

- Caregivers are an integral part in our grief work. In working with caregivers, we can:
  - Establish a narrative or understanding about what happened, and what the loved one meant to them.
  - Integrate the family's beliefs, religious practices, customs, and experiences around death.
  - Assist the family in using clear language and avoiding euphemisms around death.
    - “\_\_\_\_\_ died. In our family, we believe \_\_\_\_\_ happens after someone dies.”
  - Help the family to work together in working through the uncomfortable by normalizing varying grief responses.
  - Remember the loved one.
    - **“The Good In Us”** Activity- Writing or drawing about the positive qualities/strengths shared with the person who died.
  - “Safety Star” – Trusted adults who the child may talk to about their grief experience.



# Additional Resources

- Sesame Street in Communities – Helping Kids Grieve
  - <https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/grief/>
- Our House Grief Support Center
  - <https://www.ourhouse-grief.org/grief-pages/>
- The Dougy Center
  - <https://www.dougy.org>
- Supporting children with traumatic grief – article for educators – Cohen
  - <https://tfcbt.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/SPI4008271.pdf>
- Other Books:
  - When Someone Very Special Dies: Children Can Learn to Cope with Grief (Drawing Out Feelings Series) – M. Heegaard
  - The Invisible String – Karst
  - The Memory Box: A Book about Grief – Rowland
  - Eddie's brave journey: How one little elephant learned all about Grief - Wolfson

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# Q&A with Presenters



# Questions? Comments?



Poll: Self-assessment





## CONTACT INFO:

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## Next Session

# Grief Sensitivity Virtual Learning Institute: Option Break Out Sessions

Grief Sensitivity Break Out Discussions	<a href="http://bit.ly/GSVLlgs2">http://bit.ly/GSVLlgs2</a> No Passcode Needed
School Mental Health Break Out Discussions	<a href="http://bit.ly/GSVLlsmh2">http://bit.ly/GSVLlsmh2</a> Passcode: GriefC1*
Evidence Based Practices Break Out Discussions	<a href="http://bit.ly/GSVLlebp2">http://bit.ly/GSVLlebp2</a> No Passcode Needed

