



 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

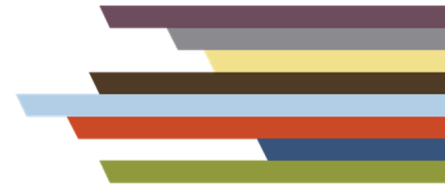
# **Grief Sensitivity Virtual Learning Institute: Supporting Grieving Students: Beyond the Basics**

Thursday, November 12, 2020




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**David J. Schonfeld, MD, FAAP**

Director, National Center For School Crisis And Bereavement  
Children's Hospital Los Angeles



# 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



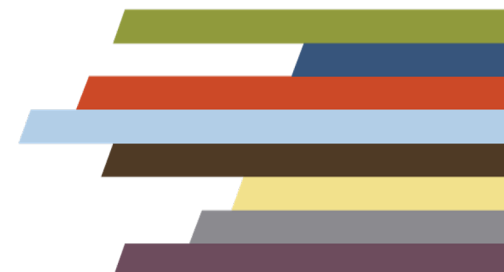


MHTTC

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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)

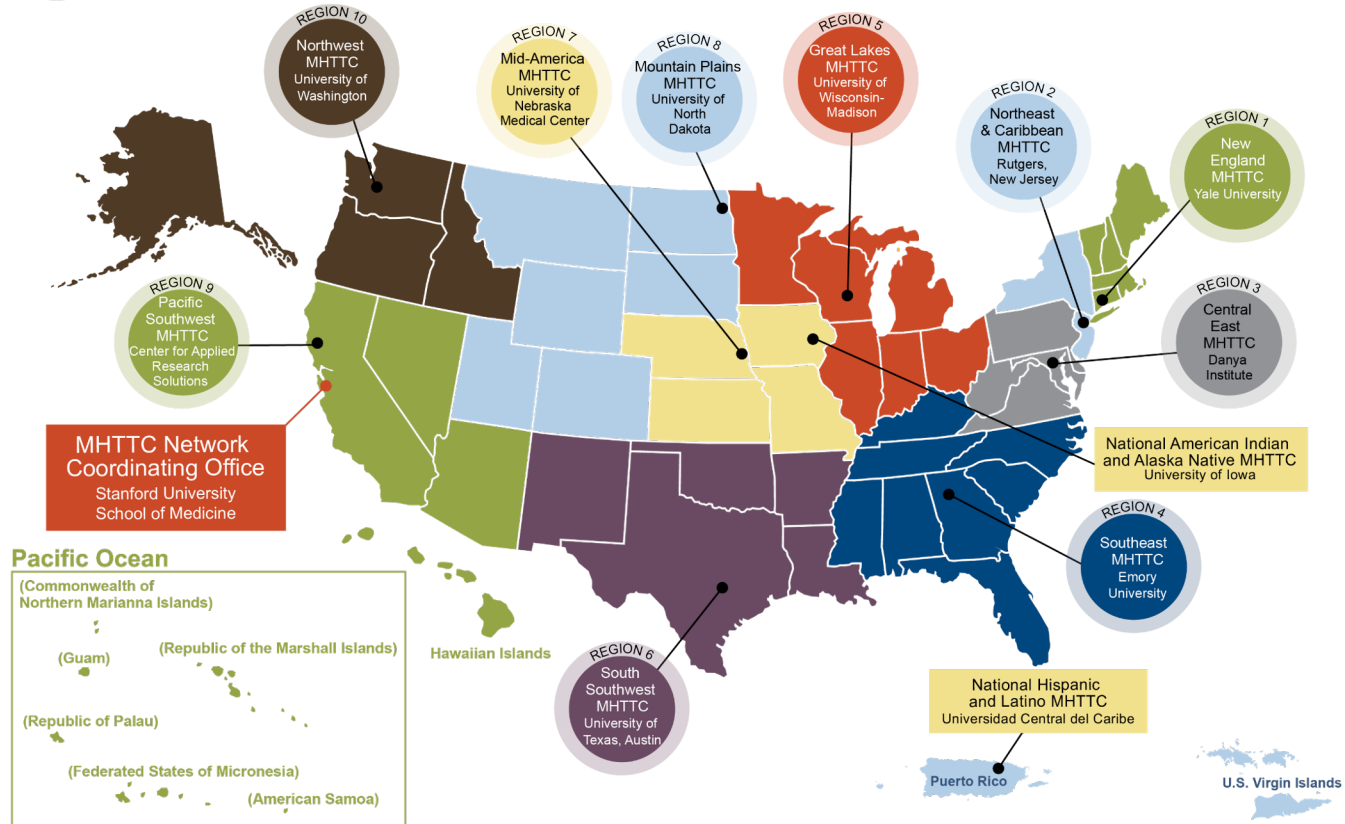


# Connect with Your MHTTC at [www.mhttcnetwork.org](http://www.mhttcnetwork.org)



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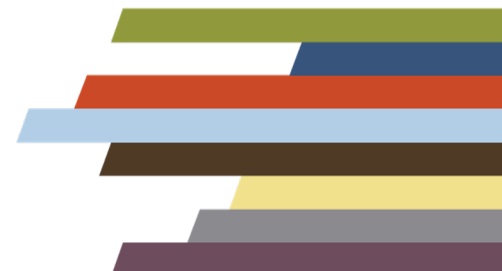


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At the time of this presentation, Elinore F. McCance-Katz served as SAMHSA Assistant Secretary. The opinions expressed herein are the views of the speakers, and do not reflect the official position of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), or SAMHSA. No official support or endorsement of DHHS, SAMHSA, for the opinions described in this presentation is intended or should be inferred.

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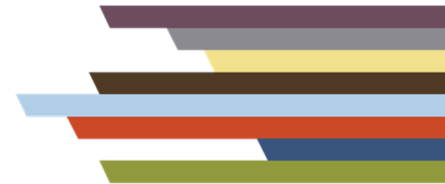
# **Grief Sensitivity Virtual Learning Institute: Supporting Grieving Students: Beyond the Basics**

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Children's Hospital Los Angeles



# Presenter



**David J Schonfeld, MD, FAAP** established and directs the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement ([www.schoolcrisiscenter.org](http://www.schoolcrisiscenter.org)), located at Children's Hospital Los Angeles. He is a Professor of Clinical Pediatrics at Keck School of Medicine. Prior faculty positions have been in the Department of Pediatrics at Yale University School of Medicine; Head of the Section of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center; and Pediatrician-in-Chief at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children and Chair of Pediatrics at Drexel University School of Medicine. For over 30 years, he has provided consultation and training to schools on supporting students and staff at times of crisis and loss in the aftermath of numerous school crisis events and disasters within the United States and abroad. Dr. Schonfeld frequently speaks (with over 1,000 presentations) on the topics of crisis and loss and has authored more than 150 scholarly articles, book chapters, and books.





NATIONAL CENTER  
FOR SCHOOL CRISIS  
AND BEREAVEMENT

## Supporting grieving students: Beyond the Basics



**David J Schonfeld, MD, FAAP**  
**Director, National Center For School Crisis And Bereavement**  
**Children's Hospital Los Angeles**

[schonfel@usc.edu](mailto:schonfel@usc.edu)

[SchoolCrisisCenter.org](http://SchoolCrisisCenter.org) | [GrievingStudents.org](http://GrievingStudents.org)

1-877-536-NCSCB (1-877-536-2722)

**Insert Poll: Did you participate in my session (part 1) on September 11, 2020?**

# Outline

- Supporting pre-school age children who are grieving
- Grief goes to college
- Grief in the context of a school crisis
- Principles of commemoration/memorialization
- Professional self-care

# Four concepts about death

1. Death is irreversible
2. All life functions end completely at time of death
3. Everything that is alive eventually dies
4. There are physical reasons someone dies

# Death is irreversible

- Children may view death as temporary separation
- Adults may reinforce this believe

*Understanding this concept allows children to begin to mourn*

# All life functions end completely at time of death

- Children may worry that the person who died is:
  - In pain
  - Afraid
  - Lonely
  - Hungry or thirsty
  - Sad

*Understanding this concept helps children understand that the person who died is not suffering*



# Everything that is alive eventually dies

- Children may believe they and their loved ones will never die
- They may be confused about why the death occurred
- Misunderstanding leads to guilt and shame

*Understanding this concept makes it less likely that children will associate death with guilt and shame*

# There are physical reasons someone dies

- If children don't understand the real reason a person died, they are more likely to create explanations that cause guilt or shame
- Adults can help children understand the physical cause of death:
  - Use brief, simple language
  - Avoid graphic details

*Understanding this concepts helps children minimize feelings of guilt and shame*

# Children may misunderstand explanations

- For young children, thought processes are concrete and literal → literal misinterpretations and misconceptions
- Religious explanations can be shared, but should not be only explanation of death

# Transition to college is difficult for grieving students

- Separated from virtually everything familiar and comforting
- Expected to make friends and have fun
- Lack privacy
- Unfamiliar with counseling and support services on campus
- Academic impact of grief → anxious about academic expectations
- May worry about parents and family members and feel it is selfish to leave home to pursue education
- School professionals can reach out to recently graduated students

# Grief in the context of a school crisis

- A death of a member of the school community can have a significant impact on many → may magnify reactions
- Information spreads quickly, including rumors and false information
- Staff are also likely to be grieving
- When educators demonstrate distress and cope effectively, they set the expectation for expressing distress, model effective coping, and help students learn how to express and cope with feelings

# Reach out to students most likely to be impacted

- Close friends; students who had a complicated/difficult relationship with individual that died
- Classmates and members of extracurricular activities (mental health professional may wish to follow schedule of student that died)
- Students who shared meaningful characteristic which increases identification with deceased, or characteristic related to cause of death
- Students with prior losses or emotional difficulties

# Students may seek support for range of reasons

- The death may remind them of prior loss or worries about future one
- They may see this as an opportunity to disclose and process a traumatic experience
- Students may find comfort in shared experience of grief and mutual support
- They may accompany friends to help them obtain support
- Reassure children it is ok if students are not personally impacted

# Benefits of memorialization

- Memorial activities help children express and cope with feelings
- By planning and taking part in a memorial event, children can exercise some control
- What you plan is far less important than how
- Children must be involved actively in planning
- The events should be relevant



# Planning memorial and commemorative activities

- A memorial planned by adults for children is more likely to be helpful to the adults
- Thoughtful memorial responses often rely on symbolic activities
- Formal memorializations may establish precedent
- Formal memorials may also serve as traumatic reminders
- Mental health professionals may discourage commemorative and memorial events because they worry these activities will trigger traumatic reminders

# Challenges of commemoration

- Children and adults may have very different needs and interests
- Children not as directly impacted may not be interested in ongoing attention or resent having school experience defined by crisis
- Disinterest may be related to sense there is nothing they can do to change events or impact

# Additional challenges

- Challenge balancing needs/desires of families of victims with those of broader school community
- Goal of memorialization is to remember what was lost and what we wish to preserve, rather than remember the moment or method of loss – minimize traumatic reminders
- Challenge when event transitions from recent shared experience → historical event

# Importance of professional self-care

- Recognize it is distressing to be with children who are in distress
- It's critical staff find ways to have their own personal needs met and appreciate and address impact of supporting children who are grieving
- Supporting grieving children can trigger a range of reactions in adults

# Compassion fatigue

- Exposure to trauma and suffering of others can lead to compassion fatigue
  - Empathy: understanding and taking perspective of another
  - Compassion: requires empathy but includes wanting to help and/or desiring to relieve suffering – “to bear or suffer together”
- Warnings about compassion fatigue imply that compassion is necessarily tiring
- Compassionate approaches can be gratifying and bring meaning to the work

# Supporting those most in need can be gratifying

- Realistic objectives of purpose of interactions
- Have skills and resources to provide meaningful assistance
- Are aware of and have sufficient support to deal with personal impact of work



COALITION *to* SUPPORT  
GRIEVING STUDENTS

Video and Downloadable Grief Support  
Modules for School Personnel

## Conversation & Support

Talking With Children >

What Not to Say >

Providing Support Over Time >

Peer Support >

VIEW MODULES



Conversation &  
Support

Developmental &  
Cultural Considerations

Practical  
Considerations

Reactions & Triggers

Professional  
Preparation & Self-Care

Crisis & Special  
Circumstances

[www.schoolcrisiscenter.org](http://www.schoolcrisiscenter.org)

COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESOURCES

[READ MORE](#)

# THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOOL CRISIS AND BEREAVEMENT

Dedicated to helping schools support their students  
through crisis and loss

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For further information about NCSCCB  
visit us, call us, like us, share us



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1-888-53-NCSCCB (1-888-536-2722)



[www.SchoolCrisisCenter.org](http://www.SchoolCrisisCenter.org) | [info@schoolcrisiscenter.org](mailto:info@schoolcrisiscenter.org)



[@schoolcrisisorg](https://twitter.com/schoolcrisisorg)



National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement

# Q&A with Presenter





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## Next Session

# Grief Sensitivity Virtual Learning Institute: Optional Break Out Discussions

Grief Sensitivity Break Out Discussions	<a href="http://bit.ly/GSVLlgs1">http://bit.ly/GSVLlgs1</a> No Passcode Needed
School Mental Health Break Out Discussions	<a href="http://bit.ly/GSVLlsmh1">http://bit.ly/GSVLlsmh1</a> Passcode: GriefC1*
Evidence Based Practices Break Out Discussions	<a href="http://bit.ly/GSVLlebp1">http://bit.ly/GSVLlebp1</a> No Passcode Needed

