



BE  THERE



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF AMERICA



NEW YORK LIFE
FOUNDATION

TOOLKIT

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STARTER KIT: BEGINNING BE THERE IN YOUR CLUB



Dear Boys & Girls Club Staff & Military-Affiliated Youth Center Staff,

We are excited that you are joining the Be There initiative. Grief is an all too familiar experience for many of the young people we serve. It is estimated that 1 in 20 children in the United States will experience the death of a parent or sibling before the age of 18 and the vast majority of children will experience other Major Life Altering Losses by the time they reach young adulthood. The New York Life Foundation has partnered with Boys & Girls Clubs of America to help Clubs provide a supportive environment for grieving children and their families. Helping young people who are grieving to heal and grow is a part of New York Life Foundation's long-term philanthropic commitment to serving young people. We are thankful for their contribution to the Be There initiative and to our mission to enable all young people, especially those who need us the most, to reach their full potential.

Grief is the natural mental, emotional, spiritual, physical and social reaction that people have to Bereavement and other Major Life Altering Losses. It is the Boys & Girls Clubs' mission to serve young people, especially those who need us most; thus, appropriately responding to youth dealing with Bereavement and other Major Life Altering Losses is a vital way that we support and serve our young people during critical times when they need us more than ever. **Bereavement loss** is the state of losing someone to death. **Major Life Altering Losses** are a variety of transitions and losses occurring due to separation from people, places or things that have played a significant role in a youth's life. Four D's categorize these losses: Death, divorce, displacement and deployment. When Clubs are provided with helpful information and resources about how grief impacts the lives of youth and how to help them, they are empowered to provide an environment that is conducive to the health and wellbeing of grieving Club members. Be There helps Clubs build their capacity to support grieving youth and connect families to grief assistance resources and outside support.

The **Be There** initiative supports Clubs in creating a high-quality Club experience for all youth by investing in building a safe, positive environment, establishing supportive relationships, and creating a sense of belonging. Be There is a comprehensive approach to help Clubs and BGCA-affiliated youth centers build supportive relationships and integrate best practices in supporting youth experiencing Bereavement and other Major Life Altering Losses. We not only want to help our youth process through their grief, but we also want to include resilience development as part of the long-term approach in preparing our youth to reach their full potential. Be There provides trainings, resources and strategies that help Clubs and youth centers increase their capacity to support youth, staff and families who are grieving. The strategies that are offered in this toolkit are meant to support your Club (youth center) in building strong supportive relationships among your youth, staff, families and community.

In service,

Be There support team

GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT

WHAT IS IT? |

Bereavement loss = the state of losing someone to death.

Grief = the natural mental, emotional, spiritual, physical and social reactions that people have to Bereavement and other Major Life Altering Losses.

The Young People Who Need Us Most

(Childhood grief in America Facts – New York Life Foundation Fact Sheet)

Nearly 1 in 20 children in the United States will experience the death of a parent before the age of 16. The vast majority of children will experience the death of a family member or friend by the time they complete high school.

Kids who lose a parent suffer in silence. The impact can be profound:

41% pretend to be okay so they won't upset their surviving parent

73% believe their life would have been "much better off" if their parent hadn't died so young

57% would trade a year of their life for one more day with their deceased parent

For too many families, support vanishes just when they need it most:

33% of Americans who lost a parent growing up agree that after the loss, they felt like there was no one they could talk to

52% of surviving parents say friends stopped talking/socializing with them

57% of surviving parents say friends/co-workers seemed uncomfortable around them after the loss

What is the Club's role?

Boys & Girls Clubs of America's mission is to serve the young people who need us most. Bereaved youth need the support and care of the Club more than ever. The Be There toolkit is a set of strategies and resources that will guide Club staff in supporting and caring for grieving youth. Clubs have a critical role to play in the lives of children who are bereaved. Staff and Club members' response to a member can serve as a source of support and stability during a difficult time. Grief due to bereavement can have a serious impact on the academic performance, social relationships and behavior of a child. By demonstrating support, staff have an enormous opportunity to improve outcomes for the youth we serve!

Clubs can help grieving members by:

- Identifying skills and sharing resources that support the coping process
- Providing ongoing support and being there when members are ready to talk
- Allowing members to express themselves constructively
- Opening the lines of communication between Club and home
- Guiding other youth on how to respond to youth who have experienced the death of someone in their life

When supporting youth who are grieving, it is important to remember that there are many factors that impact grief: Temperament, support from family, coping skills, religious beliefs, culture and age. It is important for staff to recognize that everyone grieves differently and it is important to respect each individual's beliefs and way of processing and not expect everyone to grieve the same.

LEARN MORE AT

- A Child in Grief: www.AChildinGrief.com
- The National Alliance for Grieving Children: <http://ChildrenGrieve.org/>
- The Coalition to Support Grieving Students: <http://GrievingStudents.org>
- The Dougy Center: <http://www.Dougy.org/Grief-Resources>
- The Childhood Bereavement Network: <http://www.ChildhoodBereavementNetwork.org.UK>

MAJOR LIFE ALTERING LOSSES

WHAT IS IT?

Major Life Altering Losses are a variety of transitions and losses occurring due to separation from people, places or things that have played a significant role in a youth's life.

Major Life Altering Losses can be categorized by Four D's:

Death	This includes bereavement loss as described on the previous page
Divorce	Separation of parents causing disruption to the family setting
Displacement	Family members or children being displaced and/or separated from family or caregivers due to things such as incarceration, deportation, children being removed from the home, foster care situations or abandonment
Deployment	Parents or family members who are deployed by the military for extended lengths of time

Major Life Altering Losses (MLAL) can also be considered Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE). ACEs are potentially traumatic events that can have negative, lasting effects on health and well-being. ACEs can have a tremendous impact on the future lifelong health and opportunities of youth.

The lives of youth who experience Major Life Altering Losses is forever changed and can impact a child's life in a variety of ways – loss of security, loss of feeling safe, loss of family structure, loss of plans for the future, etc. Each of these additional losses can produce grief responses in children unique to that particular situation.

What is the Club's role?

Most of our Club kids will experience a Major Life Altering Loss before they reach young adulthood. The list of grief-inducing experiences is long. Grief responses to Major Life Altering Loss are not always reflected in outward responses. As a result, it is important for staff to recognize the variety of ways grief is experienced and know how to support youth when they are experiencing a Major Life Altering Loss.

Supporting grieving youth begins with establishing caring relationships:

- Assign staff to work with a small group of members to facilitate relationship building
- Arrange dedicated meetings between members and Club professionals
- Engage youth in simple conversations
- Recognize that all behavior has a purpose and find the real reason why a member is acting frustrated or is behaving inappropriately
- Regularly share important information about youth with colleagues

LEARN MORE AT

- CDC – Adverse Childhood Experiences: https://www.CDC.gov/ViolencePrevention/ACEStudyAbout_ACE.HTML
- What Works for Building a Great Club Experience: Second Edition Boys & Girls Clubs of America (March 2016)
www.BGCA.net

RESILIENCE

WHAT IS IT?

Resilience is the result of social, cognitive and behavioral skills that youth need to be healthy and productive. These developed skills enable youth to adapt and function well despite life adversities.

Supportive relationships and resilience

Supportive relationships are essential for the health and well-being of our youth. BGCA research shows that when staff build caring, supportive relationships with individual youth, it not only boosts the overall Club Experience, but also drives youth outcomes. Studies on resilience consistently shed light on one critical common factor: The importance of youth having and maintaining connections with caring adults. It is important for youth to have adults in their lives who provide a safe environment that is consistent, encourages accountability and allows youth the freedom to express their feelings. The Club is an ideal place for youth to build these relationships with adults and their peers.

Be There offers relationship building strategies, as well as approaches that build the social-emotional skills of youth. The Be There initiative focuses on supporting staff in building the following social-emotional development skills: Communication, emotional regulation, social awareness and empathy, healthy relationships, responsible decision making, perseverance and adaptability. As youth develop the skills, behaviors and attitudes associated with these developmental areas, resilience becomes possible. More specifically, young people who have the ability to cope with challenges, are connected to their peers and adults, and navigate challenges with confidence and competence. Building supportive relationships and investing in the social-emotional development of youth is instrumental in developing resilience.

Staff Practicing

5

Key Elements for
Positive Youth
Development



4

Youth Practicing

Social-Emotional
Development
Areas



Outcome

Resilience

- A Safe, Positive Environment
- Fun
- Supportive Relationships
- Opportunities and Expectations
- Recognition

- Healthy Relationship with Self
- Healthy Relationship with Others
- Emotional Regulation
- Responsible Decision Making



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The **Be There** initiative is a comprehensive approach to help Clubs and BGCA-affiliated youth centers build supportive relationships and integrate best practices in supporting youth experiencing Bereavement and other Major Life Altering Losses. **Be There** has four focus areas: **Youth, staff, family and community.**

YOUTH WILL BE THERE

Clubs will proactively invest in the social and emotional development of Club members so that they exhibit resilience skills positioned to increase their ability to cope with loss, and support others dealing with hardships. As part of this initiative, Clubs will implement social-emotional development programs such as Ready, Set, Action and other youth-focused strategies that will teach the social-emotional skills necessary to develop supportive peer relationships and build resilience.

STAFF WILL BE THERE

Club staff will be equipped to support the emotional needs of youth who experience loss. Club staff will be offered a variety of trainings on topics ranging from working with youth who experience grief and loss, to supporting youth in developing skills necessary to face adversity. Relevant resources and strategies are accessible to all Club staff to educate and guide staff to appropriately be there for youth when hardships arise.

FAMILIES WILL BE THERE

We recognize that families are often the most critical and supportive relationship in a child's life. Clubs will invest in building strong relationships with parents and caregivers to expand capacity to support youth. Clubs will provide opportunities for families to participate in Club events that will help them learn about the emotional needs of youth and recognize how they can support them.

COMMUNITY WILL BE THERE

Providing young people with a strong community that stretches beyond the walls of the Club is essential. Clubs will raise awareness about the resources in the community available to youth and families. Clubs will connect youth and families with local support services to help grieving children and their families.

Menu of Strategies

GOAL: To implement a comprehensive approach to help Clubs build supportive relationships and integrate best practices in supporting youth experiencing Bereavement and other Major Life Altering Losses.

INSTRUCTIONS: Review each Focus Area and Suggested Strategies. Choose one to two strategies in each focus area that will support your Club in carrying out the Be There goal.

FOCUS AREA:	SUGGESTED STRATEGIES
YOUTH Promoting social-emotional wellness and fostering supportive relationships among youth.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Implement the Ready, Set, Action program – For Ready, Set, Action sites only.2. Integrate Check-In's in your youth programs.3. Create a Kindness Tree for your Club.4. Incorporate Group Norms in your youth programs.5. Build a Club Collaborative with youth.6. Celebrate Children's Grief Awareness Day.7. Promote creative expression and discussions about grief through Scholastic Art & Writing Awards – New York Life Award.
STAFF Building staff capacity to recognize and respond to the emotional needs of youth experiencing grief.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provide BGCA's full day workshop for staff on Youth and Grief: How Clubs and Club Staff Can Help.2. Organize an opportunity for staff to participate in a training on youth and grief with a local Youth Grief Center/Professional.3. Listen to the American Counseling Association's Working with Youth Who Experience Grief and Loss podcast and engage in staff discussions.4. Listen to BGCA's Be There podcast series available on Spillett Leadership University and engage staff in a discussion.5. Assign staff to work with a small group of members to facilitate relationship building with members and families.
FAMILY Developing relationships with caregivers and parents and connecting them to local resources.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Host an orientation for parents and invite your Youth Grief Center/Professional to present.2. Host a Family Health Fair and promote services provided by your Youth Grief Center.3. Organize a Family Fun Night and invite your Youth Grief Center/Professional to participate.4. Host a family workshop series on topics relevant to social-emotional wellness and family needs. Topics may include: Social and Emotional Development of Children, Children's Reactions to Stress and Loss, Everyday Grief, When to Seek Help, Grief and Bereavement.5. Use "Have the Talk of a Lifetime" cards at a family dinner.
COMMUNITY Cultivating ongoing partnerships with local support services for grieving children and their families.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Create a support service plan for grieving children and families and/or staff that includes a resource packet.2. Build a Hope After Community Project, which are community service projects created in the memory of an issue or person being grieved.3. Develop an Awareness Event during Children's Grief Awareness Day, Mental Health Awareness Month or Counseling Awareness Month.4. Have a Grief Support Professional lead staff and/or members in ongoing grief support and training activities.

Action Plan Template

1. IDENTIFY NEED: What types of loss are most common among your Club members (check all that apply in each category).

GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT	GRIEF RELATED TO OTHER LIFE TRANSITIONS AND LOSSES:
<input type="checkbox"/> Loss of family member due to death <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of a peer due to death <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of a family member due to incarceration <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of community member <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Divorce/separation <input type="checkbox"/> Community violence <input type="checkbox"/> Financial hardship <input type="checkbox"/> Break ups, bullying and other peer problems <input type="checkbox"/> Deployment of family member <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of culture <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

2. GOAL: To implement a comprehensive approach to help Clubs build supportive relationships and integrate best practices in supporting youth experiencing Bereavement and other Major Life Altering Losses.

Instructions: Refer to Focus Areas and Suggested Strategies. Choose one to two strategies for each focus area.

YOUTH STRATEGY:	KEY PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE: What role will each person play?	TIMELINE: When will this strategy take place? (Once a week, one time a year, etc.)	PROGRESS: How and when will you check in on progress?	EXPECTED NUMBER OF YOUTH SERVED:

STAFF STRATEGY:	KEY PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE: What role will each person play?	TIMELINE: When will this strategy take place? (Once a week, one time a year, etc.)	PROGRESS: How and when will you check in on progress?	EXPECTED NUMBER OF STAFF SERVED:
FAMILY STRATEGY:	KEY PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE: What role will each person play?	TIMELINE: When will this strategy take place? (Once a week, one time a year, etc.)	PROGRESS: How and when will you check in on progress?	EXPECTED NUMBER OF FAMILIES SERVED:
COMMUNITY STRATEGY:	KEY PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE: What role will each person play?	TIMELINE: When will this strategy take place? (Once a week, one time a year, etc.)	PROGRESS: How and when will you check in on progress?	EXPECTED NUMBER OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS SERVED:

Action Plan Maintenance

An important aspect of any change effort is the need to review your progress at regular intervals. Consider using staff meetings to review your Be There strategies and discuss the impact that you see them having on the behaviors of your youth, staff, families and communities.

Ask your staff:

- Have we been able to implement our strategies as planned? If not, why?
- Are our strategies having the desired impact?
- What is working and what is not working?
- Are we maintaining momentum and focus on our Be There goal?
- Are there any barriers that are hindering our progress?
- Are there any additional steps we need to take to support our strategies?
- Remember to celebrate wins along the way and to reinforce desired behavior changes!

Be There Goal: To implement a comprehensive approach to help Clubs build supportive relationships and integrate best practices in supporting youth experiencing Bereavement and other Major Life Altering Losses.				
FOCUS AREA	1 MONTH	3 MONTHS	6 MONTHS	END OF SCHOOL YEAR
YOUTH Promoting social-emotional wellness and fostering supportive relationships among youth.				
STAFF Building staff capacity to recognize and respond to the emotional needs of youth experiencing grief.				
FAMILY Developing relationships with caregivers and parents and connecting them to local resources.				
COMMUNITY Cultivating ongoing partnerships with local support services for grieving children and their families.				

Success Stories – Sharing the Impact of Be There

Your success story is an opportunity to share the achievements and progress you have made in your Be There initiative. A success story is between one to two pages and quickly tells a narrative of promising practices and the impact of the initiative.

Format

- **Title:** Capture the overall message of the story in a compelling way.
- **Need:** Describe the needs being addressed and why it's important. Include data or a concrete example if possible.
- **Activity Description:** Identify who was involved and where and when the activities took place; how did the activities involve all four focus areas: Youth, staff, families and community.
- **Activity Outcomes:** Identify any measurable outcomes, (e.g., number of youth served, number of staff participating in trainings, number of families involved and number of community partners).
- **Supporting Materials:** Quotes, photos, press releases, video clips and promotional materials can often make the story come to life. Select any supporting materials that might be a good addition to your success story.

Activity Outcomes:

In 2011:

- The Center for Grieving Children in the Boys & Girls Clubs of Fox Valley served 116 grieving children and 85 caregivers. These children reported they felt less alone (80 percent), were able to talk within the family about death (80 percent), and agree that the Center has improved their adjustment to grief and/or loss (80 percent).
- Seventeen Club staff were trained in a full day workshop titled, "Youth and Grief: How Your Club Can Help." Club staff integrated conversations about grief and loss into weekly Club programming.
- Two community events were hosted by the Center for Grieving Children where mental health resources were promoted.

Success Story Example

An Effortless Collaboration: Boys & Girls Club of Fox Valley and the Center for Grieving Children

Need: One in four American youth will lose a parent or sibling before the age of 20 (Grief Zone Camp, 2010). Further, a survey of youth in two Midwestern high schools showed that 90 percent of youth reported the death of a family member or someone they cared about.

Activity Description: Boys & Girls Club of Fox Valley has an ongoing program of peer grief support that is provided by the Center for Grieving Children. This program is available to all Club members and their families. The program is promoted through the Club website, membership packet information and individuals referrals by Club staff. Club staff is trained on how to work with youth who have experienced grief. The Club hosts biannual events for Club members and their families where the Center for Grieving Children will host a display of mental health services, such as the Youth and Family Counseling program, available in and outside the Club.

STRATEGY KIT: BUILDING OUT BE THERE IN YOUR CLUB

Partnering with a Youth Grief Support Center/Professional

All Clubs who implement Be There are required to partner with a Grief Support Organization who can assist your Club in implementing strategies and providing overall support and guidance. Here are steps that Clubs can take to engage a grief support professional and best practices in building and maintaining an effective partnership.

Building the Partnership

One of the first steps is to find a local grief support organization, or family advocacy office on base (Military) to partner with. If you do not already have an existing partnership with a grief organization, there are children's grief support programs located throughout the United States.

- New York Life's childhood bereavement web site, www.AChildInGrief.com, offers a state-by-state list of childhood bereavement organizations.
- National Alliance for Grieving Children also has a list of local partners on their "Find Support" Page: <https://childengrieve.org/find-support>

Once you contact the organization, here are different components to think about in deciding if the partnership would be mutually beneficial in supporting grieving members.

- Share information about your Boys & Girls Club, the Be There Initiative and your overall goals in supporting members. Be clear about your Club's needs and expectations.
- Describe why creating a partnership is needed to accomplish your goals.
- Identify the mutual benefits for partnering with the organization.
- What type of services do they provide and how do they align with the Movement's Five Key Elements of Positive Youth Development and your Club's individualized needs and goals? Are they able to support your Club needs? Would they be a good partner for the Movement?
- Do they have the resources, time and capacity to support your Club in implementing Be There and to provide continued support to your Club?
- Are they located in a convenient location to your Club?
- Do they have an interest and/or experience in engaging with your local Club community?
- What suggestions do they have on how to implement Be There strategies? Does your Club have the resources and capacity to implement these ideas?
- What is their overall vision on providing grief support to Club members?

Maintaining the Partnership

It is important to keep your partnership active so it can be mutually beneficial and effective for your Club and to the organization. Some things to think about as you are engaging your partner are:

- Are there established key contacts and role responsibilities at your Club and the organization?
- What is the best form and frequency of communication and/or meetings?
- What measures are in place to ensure accountability?
- Are there measurable and realistic timelines to implement strategies?
- What plan is in place to assess the impact of the partnership on overall goals?
- How will you manage feedback if the strategies implemented are effective?
- What is your long-term plan for a partnership and how will the partnership be integrated into the support structure that your Club provides?
- Continue to assess how your partnership is working and the best ways to support members.

Memorandum of Understanding Template

Please note: Military Organizations will follow the Service Branch policies and procedures for any and all partnership agreements.

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is made on the <#> day of <Month>, <Year> by and between <BGC Organization> and <Youth Grief Center/Professional>.

This MOU will run from <the effective date> until <decide upon an ending date>, at which time both parties may choose to reevaluate the partnership.

[For numbers one and two, review your family and community strategies as determined by your Be There action plan. Based on your strategies, determine what needs to be included in your MOU with your Youth Grief Center/Professional community partner.]

- **Youth focused strategy**

<Insert staff strategy from the list of suggested strategies from your Be There action plan if any require partnership with Youth Grief Center/Professional>

- **Staff focused strategy**

<Insert staff strategy from the list of suggested strategies from your Be There action plan if any require partnership with Youth Grief Center/Professional>

- **Family focused strategy**

As partners, our goals are to raise awareness about valuable information and services regarding grief and bereavement available in our community and ensure that those facing the loss of a loved one have access to necessary services. This partnership will allow <BGC Organization> and <Youth Grief Center/Professional> to <Insert family strategy from the list of suggested strategies from your Be There action plan>.

- **Community focused strategy**

This partnership will allow <BGC Organization> and <Youth Grief Center/Professional> to work together to provide support services for grieving children and/or families, as well as staff, either at the Boys & Girls Club location or the grief center location (or both). These services may include: <Insert Community focused strategy from your Be There action plan>.

Responsibilities:

<BGC Organization> will:

- BGC Responsibilities will vary depending on the Action Plan strategies determined by the Club
- Provide staff assistance with all activities related to this MOU
- Work collaboratively with <Youth Grief Center/Professional> to create an action plan and programming/activities
- Promote related activities to members, families and the community

<Youth Grief Center/Professional> will:

- Have varying responsibilities depending on the Action Plan strategies determined by the Club.
- Provide staff to assist with all activities related to this MOU, if possible
- Work collaboratively with <BGC Organization> to create an action plan and programing/activities
- Promote related activities to families and the community

On behalf of <BGC Organization>

On behalf of <Youth Grief Center/Professional>

Signature

YOUTH STRATEGY 1:

Implement the Ready, Set, Action Program

(curriculum available for Ready, Set, Action sites only)

Description: Ready, Set, Action is a 12-session youth program that develops the social-emotional skills in Club members (ages 10-13) developed by **The PEAR Institute: Partnerships in Education & Resiliency.** When loss happens, we want our Club members to be Ready to respond, Set with the skills to support and equipped to take Action. Read, Set, Action is focused on developing four key skills:

- **Teamwork** – Youth will focus on what it means to cooperate with others in a group and consider others' needs. This skill is crucial in teaching youth how to think before they act when dealing with other Club members who may be having a hard time.
- **Perseverance** – Youth will learn how to persevere in the face of challenges and frustrations. This skill is critical in ensuring that youth are able to persevere in the event of adversity.
- **Self-awareness** – Youth will develop practices to help them understand how their actions impact their experiences as well as that of their peers. This learning is instrumental in members improving the way they respond to hardships, adversity and loss.
- **Self-control** – Youth will learn effective strategies to control impulses and help improve social confidence. This is a key component to responding in a healthy way to personal loss or responding appropriately when someone else experiences grief.

Each session includes the following activities:

- **Perseverance Ritual:** An opportunity to begin each session with the same routine and movement.
- **Session Contract:** The group determines the behaviors that are appropriate for their time together and sets agreements about those acceptable behaviors.
- **Check-In:** These are opportunities for each person to check-in on how they're feeling, express how the day is going for them and be heard and seen.
- **Main Activity:** These are problem-solving and team-building activities that will help the group work toward the main goals of the session. A debrief or reflection moment is critical after the main activity.
- **Stop, Think, Go Activity:** These activities are short games to get Club members practicing impulse control each week to gain mastery over the 12 sessions.
- **Cool Down Activity:** These activities are routines to slow the group down to get ready to transition to the next program area or event happening in the Club.
- **Group Cheer:** In session one, the group develops a group cheer; a motivating statement that works to unite the group and makes a declaration as to how the group will support or be there for one another as the group navigates RSA.

Copyright: 2016 The PEAR Institute: Partnerships in Education & Resiliency

For more information about the Ready, Set, Action program, please contact Tanisha Grimes at TGrimes@BGCA.org

Youth Strategy 2:

Integrate Reflection in Your Youth Programs

Description: Reflection creates space in Club programs to share feelings and build supportive relationships with youth. Club staff are able to recognize the emotional state of members by making room at the beginning and ending of program time to reflect on how they are feeling. This is a great practice for youth to learn to be self-aware of their own emotions and practice expressing those emotions with others. Club staff can use this time to assess the group and determine how to move forward with the program time. It also allows for staff to follow up if members express that they are struggling.

Reflection Ideas:

- Name a movie, book or song that describes how you feel.
- On a scale of 1-10, how are you feeling today?
- How would your next-door neighbor describe you in two words?
- Using only facial expression and body language, show how you feel now?
- If you were going on vacation today, where would you go and why?
- What animal do you feel like today?
- Draw a picture of how you are feeling today.
- What color do you feel like today and why?
- What was the best thing that happened yesterday?

Resources:

- Copyright: 2016 PEAR – Program in Education, Afterschool and Resiliency

Youth Strategy 3:

Create a Kindness Tree For Your Club

Description: Work with youth to create a kindness tree that gives them an opportunity to honor people who they love and have lost. The tree will be hung within the Club for everyone to view. The youth will have an opportunity to write names of loved ones on leaves and also write promises to support their peers on the branches. Revisiting the kindness tree and remembering the commitment that youth are making to respect and support each other will help build a culture of wellness in the Club.

Materials needed:

- Art paper to create a base for your tree
- Green construction paper for creating leaves
- Brown construction paper for hand prints
- Markers, glue, scissors, tape

Time needed: 30-45 minutes

Steps:

- This activity can be done with any age group.
- Decide when and with whom you will facilitate the activity.
Options: Program areas, art room or age-specific groups, gender specific groups.
- Designate an area in the Club where you will put your kindness tree.
- Create a tree trunk that will have space for youth to put their leaves.
- Gather the members together and introduce the kindness tree.
- Share that, "Today we are going to honor people who we love and miss. All of us experience loss – some may have lost a pet, some may have a family member who has died, some may have a parent who is no longer around. What does it mean to honor someone? Why do you think it is a good thing to think about and talk about your loved ones?"
- Give each youth a piece of paper shaped like a leaf.
- Encourage youth to write down the name of someone who they love and miss – they can also write things that they love about that person on the leaf.
- Have youth share about the person if they want to and feel comfortable.
- Instruct youth to tape their leaf on the tree.
- Give each member a second piece of paper for their handprint.
- Share that, "Sometimes remembering these loved ones can make you feel sad. How can we support each other in our Club? What can you do to support other members in the Club who may be grieving and hurting?"
- Guide the members to write down a promise of something that they will do to support their peers who may be grieving a loss.
- Have the youth share their promises.
- Instruct youth to tape their handprint on the trunk of the tree or around the tree to show their support.
- Ask youth to revisit the tree and remind each other of the promises made to support one another.

Resources:

- Everyday Grief and Grief and Bereavement (page 3-4)
- Talking to Members About Death and Loss (page 54)
- Helping Members Support Other Members (page 68)

Youth Strategy 4:

Incorporate Group Agreements in Your Youth Programs

Description: Work together to create group agreements and encourage group connection. Staff will lead members in a discussion about what will help everyone work well together while feeling comfortable and safe. Once everyone agrees, the group will create group agreements. Keep the agreements posted in your program area so that you can review them with your youth before your program.

Steps:

- Explain to the youth that they get to determine the environment of their program and how they interact with one another.
- Ask youth to come up with their own agreements, ones that they will all agree to observe.
- Encourage youth to call out suggestions and list the ideas on a flipchart or poster.
- Ask for clarification, when needed, to be sure that everyone understands all the ideas.
- Suggest any of the recommended group agreements (below) that the youth didn't offer. They are important for establishing a safe environment.
- Agree upon your list and write it out for all the youth to see and review.
- Keep your list of group agreements posted prominently throughout the program area.
- Refer to the ground rules if someone is not adhering to them and remind everyone of their self-made agreements.

Recommended Agreements:

- **Respect** – Give undivided attention to the person who has the floor (permission to speak).
- **Confidentiality** – What we share in this group will remain in this group.
- **Openness** – We will be as open and honest as possible without disclosing others' (family, neighbors or friends) personal or private issues. It is OK to discuss situations, but we won't use names or other ID. For example, we won't say, "My older brother ..." Instead we will say, "I know someone who ..."
- **Right to pass** – It is always okay to pass (meaning "I'd rather not" or "I don't want to answer").
- **Nonjudgmental approach** – We can disagree with another person's point of view without putting that person down.
- **FUN!** – Have a good time! Creating a safe and positive environment is about having fun and respecting the members in the group.

Resources:

Adapted from Creating a Safe Space Toolkit, © 2002, Advocates for Youth, Washington, DC

Youth Strategy 5: Build a Collaborative With Youth

Description: A collaborative is a tool created by Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence that is used to bridge the gap between how Club members and staff are currently feeling and how they want to feel. Club Climate Collaboratives are great ways to promote supportive relationships, a sense of belonging and foster a safe and positive environment.

Steps:

- Determine the group context you want to implement in your Collaborative Program area, for example, with a group participating in a targeted program, for a grade level, or for the whole Club.
- Have each member think about and respond to the following questions:
 - How do you want to feel at the Club each day?
 - What will we do to have these feelings everyday and create a positive climate?
 - What will we do when we have uncomfortable feelings or conflict?
- Discuss feelings and actions with youth to establish a set of guidelines that can guide youth's interactions and behaviors based on how youth want to feel.
- Make a physical copy of your collaborative and hang it in a central space.

Resources:

- Find specific steps on how to create a Collaborative in the Positive Club Climate Staff Toolkit: https://www.bgca.net/Programs/ProgramDocuments/PCC_Staff_Toolkit.pdf

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Yale Center for
Emotional Intelligence

Youth Strategy 6:

Participate in Children's Grief Awareness Day

(Third Thursday of November)

Description: Bring attention to the needs of grieving children and the benefits they obtain through the support of others through awareness activities and projects. Your Club can be as creative as you want! Talk with your staff to determine what awareness activities would work well with your youth and create your own Grief Awareness Day tradition at your Club.

Children's Grief Awareness activity ideas:

- **Information table and posters:** During the month of November, have an information table or posters on display for Children's Grief Awareness Day.
- **Blue out:** Demonstrate your support of grieving children in a visual way by choosing a day to all wear blue on the third Thursday of November.
- **Face painting:** Offer face painting for kids at your Children's Grief Awareness Day event. The image of HOPE the butterfly is a good image for face painting.
- **Banners:** Create a Children's Grief Awareness Day banner. Have individuals sign the banner in support of grieving children.
- **Wall of hope:** Create a wall of hope. Provide paper butterflies, hearts or leaves for people to write the names of loved ones or messages of support. Attach them to a Children's Grief Awareness Day banner or poster.
- **Use the arts:** Lead youth to create artwork to honor loved ones and express their own support for grieving children.
- **Memory wall:** Create a memory wall. Tape art paper on a wall and allow people to contribute to the wall with washable markers. Or buy large canvases at a local art supply store and allow people to contribute with permanent markers or paint markers.
- **Hope chains:** Create a hope chain using various shades of blue strips of paper. Participants can write the names of loved ones they would like to remember or messages of support to others.

Steps:

- Review activities listed above and additional options online and determine what your Club wants to do to raise awareness.
- Talk to your staff about which activities you feel would be well received by your youth, families and community.
- Consider partnering with your Youth Grief Center/Professional to get ideas about how you can partner together to promote and encourage grief awareness in the Clubs.
- As the day approaches, publicize it and the activities with signs, flyers and verbal communication.
- All staff should be aware of any Children's Grief Awareness Day activities whether or not they are directly involved. Parents and caregivers should be made aware of any planned activities as well.
- Invite families and other community members and partners to be a part of a Club grief awareness event.

Resources:

- Find more activity ideas: <http://www.ChildrensGriefAwarenessDay.org/CGAD2/Participate/Index.shtml>

Youth Strategy 7:

Promote Creative Expression and Discussion of Grief through The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards

Description: Listen to stories of individuals who have experienced a major loss at an early age and engage in meaningful discussions. The Shared Grief Project introduces youth to others who have not only survived, but also thrived after the death of someone close to them when they were young. Through the videos, The Shared Grief Project allows youth to hear the perspectives from celebrities such as Kyrie Irving, Gabrielle Reece and Freddie Freeman. The videos allow youth to gain hope and perspective from the experiences of others and also learn how young people respond and help each other.

Steps:

- Choose a program area and/or age group (group sizes should not exceed 20 youth).
- Choose a video that you think would be most appropriate and most impactful to your youth – choose a video that has a celebrity your youth recognizes.
- Introduce the purpose of The Shared Grief Project is to gain hope and perspective from the experiences of others and to discuss how youth respond and help each other when they experience loss.
- Minimize distractions and show the video (video time runs 6-9 minutes).
- Lead the youth through a guided discussion using the suggested discussion questions provided (15-20 minutes).
- Potential activity to close your time together: Write a letter to the person who is the subject of the video.

Discussion Questions:

There are a number of ways you can "debrief" or discuss the video. You can lead a group discussion using open-ended questions or you can facilitate using the suggested questions provided.

1. What thoughts did you have as you watched the video and listened to the person tell their story?
2. What is your overall feeling/mood after watching the video?
3. Was there a particular part of the video that stood out?
4. What did you learn from viewing this video that you did not know before?
 - What did you learn about resilience?
 - What is resilience and how do you know you have it? Can you develop it?
5. What did you learn about hope?
6. What did you learn about grief?
7. What did you learn about families? Especially during difficult times?
8. How can you relate this video to what you've learned about losses in your life or those around you?
9. What would you say to the person in the video?
10. What would you say to encourage or comfort them?

Resources:

- The Scholastic & Writing Awards: <http://www.ArtAndWriting.org/The-Awards/Scholarships-And-Prizes/New-York-Life-Award>
- Printable PDF with information about the award available at the link above.

Youth Strategy 8:

Promote Creative Expression and Discussion of Grief Through The Scholastic Art & Writing Competition

Description: The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards and the New York Life foundation have created a special partnership to encourage teens in grades seventh through twelfth who have personally experienced a loss of a close loved one to create original works of art or writing that explore their response to a range of grief and emotions. The partnership was designed to give grieving students a safe space to grieve, and creative outlets for dealing with the death of a close loved one or other kinds of loss such as the displacement of a caregiver. During the school year, New York Life will provide six students with \$1,000 scholarships through the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

Steps:

- Encourage all teens to participate (seventh through twelfth grade).
- Organize space and time in the Club for staff to share details of the Scholastic Awards opportunity with teens.
- Have a staff member lead the teens in a discussion on everyday grief, and grief and bereavement.
 - Review resources in the toolkit on Everyday Grief, and Grief and Bereavement
 - Discussion questions provided below
- Consider inviting your Youth Grief Center/Professional partner to come in and facilitate the discussion on grief and introduce the activity.
- Encourage ALL teens to participate in this creative outlet activity to express grief. (Youth do not have to have experienced a loss of a loved one, they can express experiences with everyday grief or grief and bereavement).
- Create space and time in the Club for teens to work on their art or writing together.
- Allow space and time for teens to work on their art or writing individually too.
- Assign a staff member to check in on the progress of those participating in the opportunity.
- Facilitate a time for youth to share their finished product with other teens and the Club (if they feel comfortable).
- Showcase their artwork around the Club to recognize their work.

Discussion on Grief:

- What do you know about grief?
- Can a person experience grief even if they haven't lost a loved one?
 - Use definitions of Everyday Grief, and Grief and Bereavement provided on page 6 in Be There toolkit
- What are some experiences that may cause grief?
- What are some common experiences for teens that may cause grief?
- What are some things that you do when you experience grief?
- What are some ways that you can support others when they are experiencing grief?
- What do you think someone needs when they lose a loved one?
 - What are some ways that you can help?
 - What are some ways the Club could help?
- What are some ways that would help people cope with everyday grief, and grief and bereavement?

Resources:

- The Scholastic & Writing Awards:
<http://www.ArtAndWriting.org/The-Awards/Scholarships-And-Prizes/New-York-Life-Award>

Staff Strategy 1:

Provide BGCA's Three-hour Session, Be There: Helping Grieving Youth, for Staff

Description: Provide staff with knowledge and information that will help them recognize common reactions to grief and understand appropriate responses to these reactions in order to deepen our impact on the young people we serve. As a result of participating in this workshop, staff will be able to develop and implement a plan of action to ensure a state of readiness to support members in your Club who experience loss.

Time Needed: Time Needed: 3 ½–4 hours

The training is three hours; however, please plan for an additional 30 minutes to an hour for breaks/lunch.

Steps:

- Determine a date that your Club will host a training for your staff.
 - Invite surrounding Club staff and community members if possible
 - There must be at least 10 people who participate
- Ensure that your Club meets the requirements to serve as a H.O.S.T. site.
- Send a request for your training date request to Morgan Havig at MHavig@BGCA.org with at least 45 days notice.
- BGCA National office will review trainer availability and confirm your training dates.
- BGCA will provide an NTA to deliver the workshop for your staff.

Staff Strategy 2:

Organize an Opportunity for Staff to Participate in a Training on Youth and Grief with a Local Youth Grief Center/Professional

Description: Connect with a local Youth Grief Center/Professional to provide Club staff with knowledge and information that will help them better support grieving youth and their families. The content of the trainings will vary depending on the Club's needs and requests and Youth Grief Center/Professional's input and expertise. Trainings should emphasize how Clubs and local organizations can foster ongoing partnerships that are impactful to the youth and families that we serve.

Steps:

- Find a local Youth Grief Center/Professional near you (see Partnering with a Grief Support Organization).
- Set up a meeting with Youth Grief Center/Professional to discuss the needs of the Club and potential partnership opportunities.
- Request that they facilitate a grief education training for staff focused on education about grief and loss.
- Determine a place and time that would work for Club staff and Youth Grief Center/Professional.
- Training could be hosted at the Club or their space.
- Consider inviting volunteers and community partners to participate in the training.
- Encourage all staff to attend the training.
- Record staff who participated in training.

Resources:

- National Alliance for Grieving Children: <https://childrengrieve.org/find-support>

Staff Strategy 3:

Listen and Discuss American Counseling Association's Working with Youth Who Experience Grief and Loss Podcast

Description: The American Counseling Association has developed a Grief Support Module series for professionals. In the 10 minute podcast "Working with Youth who Experience Grief and Loss" Dr. David Kaplan discusses issues related to the death of a parent, divorce in a family and how youth serving professionals can support youth.

Steps:

- Set aside approximately 30 minutes with your staff to listen to the podcast and lead them in a group discussion about the overall messages in the podcast and how staff can support grieving members.
- Summarize and record what your team discussed so it can be documented in your Be There Report that your Club submits.

Here are some discussion questions that you can ask your staff to guide your discussion and help frame your staff's thinking in implementing grieving and bereavement support in your Club:

- What are different ways that you have seen our members grieve?
- What were some strategies the speaker gave on how to support youth who are grieving?
- What are ways that you have supported members who are grieving?
- What examples did the speaker provide that are signs a member may not be grieving in a healthy manner?
- What strategies did they give on how to address unhealthy grieving?
- The speaker shared that most youth are resilient and that increasing their resiliency can help them cope with death and loss. What are ways that you have seen our members show resiliency? As a team, how can we continue to increase the resiliency of members in the work that we do every day?
- Toward the end of the podcast, the speaker mentioned the importance of professionals in taking care of themselves to effectively support youth. What are ways that you take care of yourself so that you can support our members? What can we do as a team to continue to encourage each other to take care of ourselves?
- What is one takeaway that you can implement in our Club that you learned from the podcast? As a team, how can we continue to be accountable to each other in providing grief support to our members?

Resources:

- Transcript of podcast: <http://www.Counseling.org/Docs/Default-Source/Communications-/Working-With-Youth-Who-Experience-Grief-And-Loss1f1f26f16116603abcacff0000bee5e7.PDF?sfvrsn=2>
- 10 Tips for Facilitating a Small Group Discussion: http://www.ASP.UCAR.edu/ECSA/Download/Workshop_Training/Discussion_Facilitation_Tips.PDF

Staff Strategy 4:

Listen to BGCA's Be There Podcast Series Available on Spillett Leadership University and Engage Staff in a Discussion.

Description: Learn about the issue of childhood grief and develop an understanding of how to help through a series of brief podcasts developed by the National Alliance for Grieving Children. Each podcast was developed specifically for the Club staff professional and intentionally connects back to our 5 Key Elements for Positive Youth Development. Each podcast is 20 minutes in length and focuses on relevant issues and best practices for addressing grief with members. Club staff professionals share their experiences and grief experts share their expertise. Each podcast has a downloadable discussion guide to engage your staff in group discussions and reflections. The following podcasts are available:

- The Impact of Bereavement on Children and Teenagers.
- Understanding the Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).
- How Children Adapt to Changes in their Lives after a Death.
- How Children Adapt to Changes in their Lives after a Major Life Altering Loss (displacement, divorce and deployment).
- How to Respond to a Death in your Club.

Steps:

- Visit Spillett Leadership University on BGCA.net <https://www.BGCA.net/Training>
- Select a podcast that connects with the needs of your Club.
- Organize a listening opportunity for your staff to listen to the podcast together. Consider including this in your staff meetings as a training opportunity or consider scheduling one podcast a month to have ongoing staff development on the issue of grief.
- After the podcast, engage in a staff discussion using the discussion guide provided.
- Set a team goal for how you are going to apply something that you learned to the work that you do.

Visit:

Spillett Leadership University: <https://www.BGCA.net/Training>

Staff Strategy 5:

Assign Staff to Work with a Small Group of Members to Facilitate Relationship Building with Members and Families

Description: Build strong, trusting relationships with members and families by ensuring that every young person is known and always given an opportunity to express their feelings, interests and needs with a Club professional.

Steps:

- Work with staff to determine each staff member's age-group or gender-development expertise.
- Assign staff to work with the same small group of youth every day.
- Incorporate staff share in staff meetings to regularly share important information about youth with other colleagues.
- Use drop-off and pick-up times to share members' accomplishments and/or needs with parents and make connections.
- Periodically send home short, hand written notes with the youth that includes praise for that child's behavior that day.
- This strategy supports creating a safe, positive environment, establishing supportive relationships, and building a sense of belonging.

Resources:

Research-to-Practice Brief – What Works For Building A Great Club Experience: www.BGCA.net

Family Strategy 1:

Host an Orientation for Parents and Invite Your Youth Grief Center/Professional to Present

Description: Begin building relationships with parents and caregivers by hosting a night to clearly communicate the Club's rules, policies and programs along with introducing them to the Club staff and community partners

Steps:

- Determine a date to host the orientation for parents and caregivers.
- Invite Youth Grief Center/Professional to participate at the event.
- Ask Youth Grief Center/Professional to share about their services and hand out flyers or information.
- Begin promoting the orientation early so that parents can make plans to attend.
- Give parents an opportunity to get to know one another at the event – play an icebreaker or activity.
- Introduce each staff member and the age that they will be working with so parents will know.
- Hand out materials that help explain the mission, the programs offered and the calendar.
- Record names and information of participants for site reports.

Resources:

- Family PLUS Success Stories: <http://FamilyPlus.BGCA.org/YourCommunity/communitySupport/Connecting/Pages/FamilyPLUSSuccessStories.aspx>
- See Be There Success Stories – pages 41-50 in the toolkit

Family Strategy 2:

Host a Family Health Fair and Promote Services Provided by Your Youth Grief Center/Professional

Description: Give youth and families an opportunity to connect to resources and community services that accommodate their daily needs and contribute to the overall well being of the family. This opportunity will give parents and caregivers a chance to connect to resources and will support them in nurturing the development of their youth in our three priority outcome areas.

Steps:

- Consider hosting the health fair in conjunction with a Club sporting event such as flag football, soccer, basketball, dance, etc.
- Research local community resources in your area that would benefit the health and wellbeing of families that you serve:
 - Youth Grief Center/Professional
 - Food and nutrition services
 - Health care providers
 - Local fitness centers
- Choose a date to host your event and reach out to local community resources to attend.
- Provide tables and necessary equipment for the partners to present their information.
- Recruit families to attend by inviting parents/caregivers personally, post flyers of the workshops, sending emails with dates and communicating in advance.
- Record names and information of participants for site reports.

Resources:

Health Fair Planning Guide: https://www.MODAHealth.com/PDFS/Wellness/Health_Fair_Planning_Guide.PDF

Family Strategy 3:

Organize a Family Fun Night and Invite Your Youth Grief Center/Professional to Participate

Description: An evening of fun and enjoyment that gives families the chance to interact positively while offering Clubs opportunities to reach out to the community. Evenings could include movie nights, family dinners, game night, fitness competitions, scavenger hunts, family art projects and more.

Steps:

- Brainstorm with your staff to determine what type of event your families would enjoy.
 - Consider asking parents for their perspectives and input
- Determine a date that would work for your Club to host your family event.
- Invite Youth Grief Center/Professional to be a part of the evening Ways to get them involved:
 - ♦ Have a table to share their resources.
 - ♦ Welcome parents and hand out flyers at the event.
 - ♦ Ask them to lead an activity.
 - ♦ Give them an opportunity to share briefly.
- Invite families to participate by sending emails, hanging flyers, sending letters/invitations home with youth and handing out flyers when parents pick up their children.
- Have families sign in at the event. Make sure they include their name, phone number and email so that you can email them and thank them for participating.
- Record names and information of participants for site reports.

Resources:

- Engaging Families Toolkit:
<http://www.BOSTNet.org/WP-Content/Uploads/2014/07/Handout-B-Engaging-Families-Toolkit.pdf>
- How to Run a Successful Family Night:
<https://www.PTOToday.com/PTO-Today-Articles/Article/1183-How-To-Run-A-Successful-Family-Night>

Family Strategy 4:

Host a Family Workshop Series on Topics Relevant to Social-emotional Wellness and Family Needs

Description: Work with your Youth Grief Center/Professionals to create workshop opportunities for parents that center around building family capacities to support them in nurturing the development and wellbeing of their youth and family. These programs are primarily community based services and workshops that are offered to the Clubs by collaborating community partners.

Steps:

- Take time with your staff to discuss and consider the greatest needs of the youth and families in your community and Club.
- Meet with Youth Grief Center/Professional to discuss if they would offer skilled trainers or counselors to deliver the workshops.
- Consider topics such as:
 - Social and Emotional Development of Children
 - Children's Reactions to Stress and Loss
 - Everyday Grief
 - When to Seek Help
 - Controlling My Emotions
 - Anger Management
 - Communicating with My Child
 - Grief and Bereavement
- Decide the number of workshops and the dates you would offer them.
- Begin promoting the dates at least a month in advance.
- Recruit by inviting parents/caregivers personally, posting flyers of the workshops, sending emails with dates and communicating in advance.
- Engagement and recognition strategies: Offer food/dinner at the workshops, include incentives for attendance, celebrate completion and create certificates for parents who attend all sessions in a series.
- Have families sign in at the workshop by including their name, phone number and email so that you can email them and thank them for participating.
- Record names and information of participants for site reports.

Resources:

Family Plus Success Stories: <http://FamilyPlus.BGCA.org/YourCommunity/CommunitySupport/Connecting/Pages/FamilyPLUSSuccessStories.aspx>

Family Strategy 5:

Use Talk of a Lifetime Cards at a Club Family Dinner

Description: Encourage youth and parents/caregivers to learn more about their loved ones by having the talk of a lifetime at your next family event. "Have the Talk of a Lifetime" cards were developed to encourage families to get to know one another and build supportive relationships. Sitting down with loved ones to talk about their lives can be a rich and satisfying experience. Learning about memorable events, people, places, values and lessons they have learned can help bring families closer together. It is also a great tool to use for members to get to know their Club staff. Each card has a question that opens up opportunities to build supportive relationships.

Steps:

- Schedule a family dinner and invite all parents and caregivers to attend.
- Place "Have the Talk of a Lifetime" cards at each table.
- Have parents and youth alternate picking a card and asking the question.
- Give everyone 30 minutes (or more) to share together at the table
- Encourage each table to share something new that they learned about their loved one with the group.

Resources:

Be There Clubs can request a deck of "Have the Talk of a Lifetime" from mhavig@bgca.org

Clubs can order more cards here: <http://www.nfda.org/resources/public-community-relations/community-relations/have-the-talk-of-a-lifetime>

Community Strategy 1:

Create a Support Service Plan for Grieving Children and Families that Includes a Resource Packet

Description: It is important for Clubs to have a structure in place with a plan and community resources to support grieving members and their families. Collaborate with Club staff and your grief support partner to create a Grief Support Service plan for Club members and their families that includes (1) the steps your Club will take to serve grieving members (2) a referral system of relevant resources to support members and (3) a resource guide that is accessible for Club staff and families that can be shared with your local Club community.

Steps:

- Partner with your grief support partner to create a plan.
- Develop the components of your support plan by asking the following questions:
 - How does your Club currently offer grief support to members?
 - What current resources already exist that would benefit your members and their families?
 - What further support is needed?
 - How can the Clubs help families with grieving and loss?
 - What type of support can your grief support professional provide?
- Create a user-friendly resource guide. Be strategic about the resources guide that you create and verify existing resources and think about a format that is appropriate for the Club community you serve.

Resources:

The National Alliance for Grieving Children: "Find Support" Page:
<https://ChildrenGrieve.org/Index.php?=Find-Support>

Community Strategy 2:

Provide Ongoing Grief Support Activities to Members

Description: Clubs can connect with grief support professionals to provide continued grief support for members and engage community partners by inviting them to participate in grief support activities. Find one or more grief support professionals who can come into your Club periodically to conduct short interactive grief activities for members. These activities can provide tools to help build coping skills and resiliency in members and increase the capacity of your community partners in serving members.

Steps:

- Use your grief support professional to provide activities to Club members or help you find other grief professionals and partners who can implement activities in your Club.
- Decide the best way to implement ongoing activities in your Club by thinking about the following:
 - Will you chose certain age groups during different time periods?
 - Are there certain members who may benefit certain types of activities?
 - Are there certain areas for the activities to be focused around?
- After activities are implemented, determine how Club staff can incorporate grief support strategies into everyday Club activities.
- Use your community partners to help your Club provide support and resources to members and their families.

Resources:

The Dougy Center Grief Support Program: <http://www.Dougy.org/Grief-Support-Programs>

Community Strategy 3:

Create a Community Awareness Event

Description: There are opportunities to engage your Club community partners and participate in Nationwide Community Awareness Events. Through collaboration with a community partner and/or your grief support professional, create a grief and awareness event during at least one of the following awareness months:

- Children's Grief Awareness Day: Third Thursday in November
- Counseling Awareness Month: April
- Mental Health Awareness Month: May

Your Club may also decide to implement an awareness event for more than one of the awareness months, which could be a good opportunity to build on your first awareness event and use different community engagement strategies. Events can be conducted at your Club, at a community organization or at a location in the community at large.

Steps:

- Visit each website to learn more about the awareness days and also find ideas for different activities and toolkits to help your Club get started.
- Determine which community partners to involve in the project.
- Find an activity or issue that is important for your Club to focus on.
- Pick when you will implement your activity.
- Think about any existing literature or resources you may want to distribute during your event.
- Document your event, take pictures and capture stories.

Resources:

Collaborate with a community partner and/or engage your local Club community by participating in nationwide grief and awareness activities. Use your community partners to help your Club provide support, and also as a resource available for members and their families. Create awareness around grief during at least one of the Awareness Months:

- Counseling Awareness Month:
<http://www.Counseling.org/About-Us/Counseling-Awareness-Month-2016>
- Mental Health Awareness Month:
<http://www.MentalHealthAmerica.net/May>
- Children's Grief Awareness Day:
<http://www.ChildrensGriefAwarnessDay.org/>

Community Strategy 4:

Hope After Community Project

Description: The National Alliance for Grieving Children provides support to organizations in building a Hope After Community Project. These are community service projects that can be created in the memory of the person being remembered, an issue a member is grieving over or a past loss that has been experienced. The purpose of the service project is to help those who are grieving or have experienced loss to find hope. Examples of previous projects have been planting trees in memory of a father, cleaning up a homeless youth center or restoring a community garden. Your local Club community can be brought together to create positive experiences while recognizing grieving and loss. With one or more community partner, build your own community service learning project with members.

Steps:

- Visit the Hope After Project website, which contains a detailed description of the project, existing projects and where to find help in your community to build this project.
- Decide which of your Club's community partner(s) will be involved in this project by asking the following questions:
 - Will it be an existing partner with a certain interest area, or a new partner you want to engage?
 - What issues are happening in your community that you think your Club can address?
 - How can your grief support professional help you?
- Get project ideas from Club members. Be sure to include the perspective of Club members and topic areas that may be of interest to them. This can also serve as a service learning project for members.
- Document your project by including:
 - A description of your project
 - Ways community partners were engaged
 - How it was implemented in the community
 - Pictures of the project
 - Any stories that you want to share about the impact on your members and your Club community

Resources:

The Hope After Project: <http://www.HopeAfterProject.com/>

BE THERE SUCCESS STORIES

Success Story: Suicide Prevention Training Teaches Staff and Youth How to Save a Life

Need:

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10-24 (2015 CDC WISQARS). More teenagers and young adults die from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia, influenza and chronic lung disease combined. The rate of suicide deaths among children between the ages of 10-14 has doubled since 2007. There are an average of more than 5,240 suicide attempts by young people in seventh through twelfth grades each day in our nation. Four out of five teens who attempt suicide have given clear warning signs.

Activity Description:

As a part of our Be There grant, Boys & Girls Clubs of Oceanside partnered with the County of San Diego's Health and Human Services Department to offer the QPR: Question, Persuade and Refer Gatekeeper Program for Suicide Prevention. Sadly, during the past several years, our Club has been touched by the suicide deaths of youth members. These tragedies deeply affect our staff, members and Club families. In the last two months, one of our teen members has attempted suicide twice and she has been hospitalized for intensive treatment both times. Earlier in the school year, a local high school senior, with seemingly everything going for her, committed suicide.

Activity Outcomes:

Boys & Girls Club of Oceanside has had programs in place for several years to help youth deal with grief and also the mental health issues that often lead to the despair and hopelessness that precede a suicide attempt. Boys & Girls Club of Oceanside is taking a proactive approach to this troubling phenomenon, providing both our teen members and Club staff with the QPR training. In November, 25 staff and teen members went through the QPR training. During the training staff learned:

- How to recognize the warning signs for suicide.
- How to ask open-ended questions to determine if someone is planning suicide.
- How to persuade the person to get help.
- How to get both immediate and long-term help for someone.

Through this training, staff and youth felt empowered in their ability to better recognize the warning signs of suicide. They became confident in their ability and began to have those difficult conversations. They became more knowledgeable about the resources that are available in our community. These resources include the local suicide hotline, counseling resources, the QPR training resource and the Children's Bereavement Manager at Elizabeth Hospice - Melissa Lunardini, M.A. This was the second time Boys & Girls Club of Oceanside offered this training and we plan to offer it again.

This training was invaluable during a recent attempted suicide, when staff were able to support the family and offer referrals, as well as help all of our youth members process and understand what was happening. The funds from the Be There grant enabled us to build our staff to capacity to respond to grief and loss.

Success Story: A Community Changing Collaboration: Boys & Girls Club of Manchester and the Manchester Community Health Center

Need: New Hampshire's Heroin Crisis has a Record of Deaths due to Overdose

In 2016, there were approximately 400 drug-overdose related deaths in New Hampshire. This is the highest in the state's history (Medina). With a population of roughly 1.4 million, the state has one of the highest per-capita rates of addiction in America. We have seen the drug crisis impact many youth in our community. Many youth have parents and guardians addicted to and/or dying from their drug use. Youth have a high risk of being involved with drugs as well. In New Hampshire, 7,000 adolescents (4,000 males and 3,000 females) needed, but did not receive treatment for past-year drug problems. Of the total number of clients in treatment, 502 (12.3 percent) were under the age of 18 ("Teen Drug Rehab New Hampshire; Teen Alcohol Rehab New Hampshire"). Manchester has a great need for more mentors and counselors to help individuals and families through this crisis.

Activity Description:

The Boys & Girls Club of Manchester has an ongoing collaboration with the Manchester Community Health Center. The Boys & Girls Club of Manchester is able to refer members, parents and families to the Manchester Community Health Center when they are in crisis. The Manchester Community Health Center also offers a mentoring program for middle school and high school members. This mentoring program is given to members at no cost. Through this program, the Manchester Community Health Center's counselors are available to speak to the member at school or at the Boys & Girls Club of Manchester. Through these two programs, members and families from the Boys & Girls Club of Manchester are allowed access to counselors and mentoring that they may have not have been able to access elsewhere. These programs are posted to the Club's bulletin board in the front lobby. There are also consent forms that the Individual Services Directors have access to. They are able to give these forms to members in need. The Club also hosts annual events with the Manchester Community Health Center to promote their services and give members the opportunity to get to know the center's staff.

Activity Outcomes:

2016-17

- The Manchester Community Health Center came to the Boys & Girls Club of Manchester to create a Grieving Hearts Wall for Valentine's Day. Members were able to write a name of a loved one on the wall. During this time, members and family members spoke with the center's staff about their grievance and learned more about what they had to offer. By the end of the night, there were approximately 50 hearts on the wall. Brochures were also made available to families about the services that the Manchester Community Health Center offers.
- Thirty Club staff members were trained by a BGCA staff about youth dealing with grief. Club staff were able to speak about grief situations they have been faced with and learn the best way to help grieving youth.
- Through the mentoring programs at the Manchester Community Health Center offered, we were able to refer two families and six members to the Health Center for help – some of which are presently dealing with a drug crisis in their family.
- Through the Ready, Set, Action (RSA) program facilitated each week at the Club, members who struggled with teamwork were able to learn how to work with others in a more positive and effective way. RSA members had a positive outcome from the program as seven out of the 15 participants exhibited more positive behavior within the community and at the Club.

Success Story: Mending Inner Club Brokenness: Boys & Girls Club of Benton Harbor and Ready, Set, Action

Need:

In less than a year's time, in a city where the population is just under 10,000 and a Club community where we serve more than 800 kids between two sites, we experienced four deaths – all Club members. All four of the members were young men on track to graduate high school with promising futures ahead of them. Two of them were murder victims, one collapsed while playing basketball and the final member drowned after jumping off a beach pier. One of them, Travonne, was named Young Man of the year in May 2015 by the Boys & Girls Club of Benton Harbor Teen Center. Throughout that time, we also experienced an overwhelming amount of members losing their caretakers as well as staff members losing close loved ones. With such interconnectedness within our community and Clubs, everyone was affected by such a large amount of death. Without a concrete plan in place to assess grief, the trauma we endured as a Club community took a toll on all of us.

Activity Description:

When the Boys & Girls Club of Benton Harbor accepted the Be There grant, many resources were gathered to assess the youth, staff, families and community. Ready, Set, Action was facilitated by a RSA trained staff member who implemented the program's core values not only within the group, but also Club-wide. Many techniques expressed in RSA were used to help reshape disciplinary protocols. All staff were a part of a National Grief Awareness training that offered a safe place of healing and renewal. We are still strategically thinking of ways to engage with the families and the community.

Activity Outcomes:

2016

- Lorry's Place, Lakeland Health Care and Petz Carlton Pet Therapy signed on as community partners for the Be There Grief Initiative.
- Three families participated in our family night and the introduction of Ready, Set, Action.
- Six Club members signed on to participate in Ready, Set, Action, which is a twelve-week resiliency building program that helps members gain skills in teamwork, self-awareness, self-control and perseverance.

2017

- Twenty-four staff members were trained by a National Boys & Girls Club facilitator on grief awareness/effective grief coping strategies for youth.
- A Club member, Jajsia, completed Ready, Set, Action and went from weekly Club suspensions to attending the Club regularly with a significant change in behavior and overall attitude.
- A Club member, Jeremesha, completed Ready, Set, Action and expressed that she felt a deep sense of belonging due to the program.
- Three of our Club members who were participants in Ready, Set, Action were able to find a safe space to talk about the daily grief of fatherlessness due to crime and incarceration. They were also able to bond with one another over their similarities and gain strength from the RSA's program techniques, peer support and staff support.

Success Story: Daddy's Home: Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee

Need:

There is not a day that we don't hear about, or see a horrific story on the 10 o'clock news about death and dying. Children are often forgotten when it comes to grief and dying. One of the most fictitious statements is, "Children are so resilient that they can get through anything." They may be able to get through things, but often at the price of emotional stress and unmet needs. They often don't have the stability that they need at home to support them. Be There is a breath of fresh air to our youth who need social-emotional support.

Activity Description:

In the fall of 2016, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee launched Be There/Ready, Set, Action curriculum to help children learn to handle difficult life situations. We helped youth who were not getting the needed assistance at home to navigate these tough circumstances. The launch of the program occurred at the Carson Academy Boys & Girls Club, with children ages 7-14. The participants were identified by the Club manager as individuals who displayed some behavior issues. The Club manager had prior knowledge of these children experiencing things such as the death of a parent, sibling or other loved one.

Activity Outcomes:

2016-17

- The Be There initiative served 17 youth during the 2016-17 school year. Along with these participants, at least 15 other members asked to be a part of the group and were included in select games.
- Be There held four family events over the course of the school year that provided youth and their guardians with opportunities to receive resources from mental health professionals, explore healthy outlets such as the arts to express their feelings and engage in their school community.
- Program facilitator, Dana McClain-Kelly, was selected as a peer coach for the next cohort of facilitators who implemented the program in the summer and fall of 2017.

Success Story:

One of our Ready, Set, Action program participants, a second grader at the Carson Academy Boys & Girls Club, lost his mother in a car accident when he was 22 months old. His father was driving drunk when the tragic accident occurred. Due to the death of his mother and the incarceration of his father, this young man is being raised by his great grandmother. His sister, who was five months at the time, is being raised by their grandmother. This young man and his sister had been visiting their father since the accident, but they did not have a relationship with their father. After seven years, the father was released from prison this past May. The young man had a meltdown when his great grandmother arrived to pick him up from the Club with the news that he was going to visit his father that day. The Club had just finished a Ready, Set, Action session, and the program facilitator (Dana McClain-Kelly) called the young man over to encourage him that everything was going to be okay, and that they would talk about it the next day. He agreed and left for his visit with his great grandmother. The next day, he was in good spirits and seemed very excited to have another visit with his father that weekend. Thanks to the support he received from his family and the Be There initiative, this young man now speaks of his father in a loving way. Being able to deal with grief and apprehensions has been very helpful in his family transition.

Success Story: Converting Tragedy into Strength: The Marcus A. Blakeney Alumni Scholarship Event at the Boys & Girls Club of Worcester

Need:

The sudden death of former Club alumni Marcus Blakeney at the age 33 prompted his family to address a need in our community. Until last year, there were no health-themed family events in Worcester. Thanks to the Blakeney family and Club staff, Worcester now has an annual event where people of all ages can participate in fun, healthy activities where they talk frankly about healthy living, death and all things health-related.

Activity Description:

Throughout the 90s, Marcus Blakeney was the quintessential Club member. He topped off his Club career as Youth of the Year in 2000. He worked at Club jobs from the ages of 13-18, serving as the face of the Club at the front desk, in Kids Café, and in most program areas. As an adult, he worked as a youth counselor at Worcester's Harvard House, a group home for adolescent boys. His sudden death from heart failure at the age of 33 in March 2015 was a shock and a wake-up call for Worcester, as well as the Club community.

Marcus' mom and grandmother gave their blessing to host a Club-staff-and-alumni-planned, health-themed family event in April of 2016. The second annual event was held this past April, and close to 200 people and 50 families attended. The volunteers were all current or former Club members. There were healthy activities for kids and adults, such as a three-point basketball contest, a two-ball competition, kickball and football activities. Healthy snacks were provided, as well as information on mental health, men's health, WIC and a "test your blood pressure" station. Ticket, raffle and t-shirt sales helped fund a scholarship in Marcus' name.

"Marcus was more than an alum. The Club made us family, and having this scholarship gives us a chance to give back to the community in his memory." – Beth Ramautar, event organizer

The event is promoted through the Club website and social media, as well as through our YouthConnect partners (a coalition of the seven main youth-serving agencies in Worcester, which includes the Club) and our community grief/mental health partner.

Activities outcomes:

- Two Marcus A. Blakeney Alumni Scholarship events have now taken place at the Club, where health, mental health and grief resources were promoted and information disseminated. Planning for the third annual event is already underway.
- Two Marcus Blakeney scholarships have been provided so far for Club seniors to study health, education or human services in college.
- YOU Inc. provided a counselor who counseled 50 kids per week (most of them weekly). More than 30 of them were affected by grief or bereavement issues. He conducted training sessions with 18 staff on how to connect with grieving youth, and counseled Club kids on how to help friends who are grieving.
- Fifty staff attended a three-hour training on understanding and helping kids with bereavement.

The Be There initiative not only enabled us to build our staff capacity to respond to grieving youth, but it also helped us expand our outreach to educate more of the community on mental health, grief and healthy living.

Success Story: A Village to Support a Community: The Yawkey Boys & Girls Club of Roxbury (Boston, MA)

Need:

According to the New York Life fact Sheet, 52 percent of surviving parents say friends stopped speaking with them, and 57 percent say co-workers seemed uncomfortable speaking with them after the loss of their loved one. As the Yawkey Club social worker, I realized that these two statistics spoke volumes to the ways we could further support our community. In particular, only 32 percent of our members live with both parents. The presence of only one parent means that many members are affected by divorce, separation, incarceration, death, etc. Parent's needed a place to be heard, and families (both parents and youth) needed someone who would feel comfortable speaking to them about grief and loss.

Activity Description:

The Club collaborated with three major organizations in Boston: The Children's Room, PEAR and Louis D. Brown Peace Institute. The Be There initiative helped us to define and specify our support systems of individual, staff, family and community.

Activity Outcomes:

- We directly impacted 45 youth who were in our Ready, Set, Action social-emotional groups and indirectly impacted the 250 youth who attend the Yawkey Club on a daily basis.
- Forty Boys & Girls Club of Boston staff attended our six-hour training on grief and loss.
- More than 10 parents got involved in our workshops and reported that they felt connected and supported.

Individual:

The Yawkey Club administered Holistic Students Assessments (HSA) <https://www.ThePearlInstitute.org/Holistic-Student-Assessment> is an 86 question self-administered survey that was taken by 200 Yawkey Club members. This data shows the strengths and challenges of each member compared to other youth who live in cities. This data was used for our professional staff to review the specific needs of two to four members every week during staff meeting. Its purpose was for staff to discuss how we can best support our members. For members going through grief and loss, this is especially important for staff to see how we can use their strengths to address their challenges. Staff also used the HSA data to see which members would benefit from participating in the social-emotional group Ready, Set, Action. RSA focused on building friendships, working as a team, and gaining coping skills when youth were upset or frustrated. These skills are important for youth going through grief or loss. At times, youth may

feel isolated or frustrated when going through grief or loss. In total, we facilitated five groups and had 45 members complete the group.

Staff:

In December, the Yawkey Club hosted a six-hour training for 40 staff members. We included all full-time staff from our Club, as well as staff from other Boston Boys & Girls Clubs. The training added to the staffs' skill set and made them more comfortable and better prepared to speak with youth about grief and loss. There have been at least 10 occasions where members have spoken to staff about loss and staff were able to have a conversation with the youth. For example, one day a particular member was acting out of character and was becoming easily frustrated and tried to exit the building.

The staff went to talk to the member and during the conversation with the member, it was revealed that the child's other parent had passed away years ago on that day. These types of conversations continued with our social worker and the child's parent/guardian to ensure we could best support the member.

Families:

In January, the Yawkey Club hosted a family workshop with the Peace Institute and the Louis D. Brown Children's Room. A total of six families came and participated in activities. The workshop for the parents was an open conversation about their experiences of grief and loss, including the challenges, impact on the children/relatives, and how they can support one another. The children did an activity where they wrote out all of their thoughts about the individual who passed away. At the end of the workshop, the parents and children came together and created a candle memorial piece for their loved one. We know that two of the families reached out to a mental health agency for additional support because of the event.

Community:

On June 5, the Yawkey Club partnered with the Louis D. Brown Institute and the Children's Room to host our first Grief and Loss Awareness Day. The purpose of this event was to provide families with resources of other mental health organizations in the community. Six other mental health organizations from around Boston came to support the event. After sharing resources with families, the Peace Institute and The Children's Room conducted a workshop with the organizations and families. It developed into a conversation about how the community can come together and talk about loss more often.

Success Story: Breaking the Stigma and Bridging the Gap one Child at a Time

Need:

Grief is a huge obstacle that many of our children face. Many of the parents of children served in afterschool have surrendered to the devastating effects of drug abuse. The people who suffer the most are the children in these situations. During one eight-week stint over the winter of 2010-11, thirteen children lost a parent due to drug overdose.

Activity Description:

Harlan County Boys & Girls Club has an ongoing grief program with Dayspring Counseling Services. The program is offered to all youth who are enrolled at the Boys & Girls Club. Many of our youth are referred to seek counseling services, but have lacked doing so because of transportation issues and parents not wanting their child associated with the stigma of counseling. With Daysprings Counseling Services, we have a counselor onsite during our hours of operation. The counselor works directly with the Club staff. We have set aside a day each week for her to facilitate a group activity with all the members. She also does one-on-one counseling with the youth if needed.

Activity Outcomes:

- Harlan County Boys & Girls Club and Dayspring Counseling Services served 256 different youth at the Boys & Girls Club during group counseling activities.
- Fifty-seven youth are signed up for individual counseling at the Club and have exhibited a marked difference in their behaviors.
- Our staff of four along with 18 other members in the community were trained in a full-day workshop titled, "Youth and Grief: How Your Club Can Help." Club staff were able to learn different ways to talk to youth about grief during our everyday programming.
- We have built great relationships with our families and several have come to us in time of need asking for help with grief and bereavement.
- Our membership has increased since the implementation of Be There. We have close partnerships within the community where kids are being referred to the Club for this program.

Success Story: A Collaboration to Help Children Thrive: Boys & Girls Club of Laguna Beach and Mission Hospital

Need:

According to the principal at Laguna Beach High School, the divorce rate in our community is 80 percent. This profoundly affects our youth in numerous ways. The 2013-14 California Healthy Kids Survey identified Laguna Beach Unified School District students as having one of the highest rates of alcohol and substance use in all of Orange County. Laguna Beach youth are using alcohol and drugs more often, and at a younger age than ever before.

- Thirty-three percent of Laguna Beach eleventh grade students reported having participated in binge drinking (five or more drinks in a row) during the past 30 days.
- Twenty-two percent of Laguna Beach ninth graders and 54 percent of eleventh graders reported having used alcohol or some form of drugs within the last 30 days.
- The 2012 California Healthy Kids Survey showed that 24 percent of eleventh graders reported chronic sadness, which increased to 32 percent in the 2014 survey.
- The 22nd Annual Report on the Conditions of Children in Orange County in 2015, found that since 2008 there had been a 47 percent increase in the rate of hospitalization due to serious mental illness and substance abuse among children and teens.

The risk factors for teen self-inflicted injury and suicide in Orange County (conducted by the Orange County Health Care Agency and Sheriff-Coroner in May 2015) presented information on both non-fatal and fatal self-inflicted injury to teen residents ages 10-19 living in Orange County from 2009-13. The four highest rates of self-injury occurred in Alamitos, Laguna Beach, San Clemente and Aliso Viejo. The Boys & Girls Club of Laguna Beach serves youth living in both Laguna Beach and Aliso Viejo. These startling statistics provide evidence that our community's youth need caring adult role models to help them cope with the effects of divorce, drugs, suicide and other challenges.

Activity Description:

Boys & Girls Club of Laguna Beach has an ongoing program of peer grief support using the Be There format and Ready, Set, Action curriculum in collaboration with Mission Hospital of Laguna Beach. It is a strength based model of intervention to help build Club members competency and resiliency skills through relationships with positive adult role models. This program is available to all Club members and their families. The program is promoted through the Club website and individual referrals by Club staff. Our Education Behavior Specialist facilitated the program on a weekly

basis. Examples of activities facilitated include: Juggling to teach perseverance; creating glitter jars to teach stress management/calm mind; turn-styles (jump rope games) teaching team work, self-awareness, awareness of others and self-control.

Two trainings were held for Club staff to learn how to work with youth who have experienced trauma and grief. The first was in February 2017 and was presented by Western Youth Services. The second training, held in May 2017, was presented by Boys & Girls Club of America. The Club had events for Club members and their families, which included a Health and Community Resource Fair that was held on May 20, 2017 at the Laguna Beach high school gym. The one-on-one meetings with parents proved to be the most successful because it helped the families find the resources available that were specific to their family's need.

Activity Outcomes:

- Two hundred and fifty youth were exposed to the Be There initiative through daily interactions with trained staff.
- Twenty-five youth participated in the Be There initiative and 12 members participated in the Ready, Set, Action curriculum.
- Fifty Club staff were trained in two staff trainings.
- Club staff integrated conversations about grief and loss into weekly Club programming.
- Two community events were hosted, one by Western Youth Services and Mission Hospital and the other a Health and Community Resource Fair with the participation of numerous health and mental health providers.
- Pre-and post-tests were given to participants that measured members' empathy toward others. The results showed:
 - 71 percent of participants displayed an increased understanding and feeling of healthy relationships
 - 71 percent of participants displayed an increased knowledge and application of self-control
 - 57 percent of participants displayed an increased knowledge and application of resiliency
 - 43 percent of participants displayed an increased knowledge and feeling of self-confidence

Success Story: Boys & Girls Clubs of the Tennessee Valley Seeks to Build Resilience Within the Youth Who Need Us Most!

Need:

According to Boys & Girls Club of the Tennessee Valley's National Youth Outcomes Annual Survey:

- Almost one out of five youth who completed the survey experience emotional insecurity.
- Just under half of all youth (43 percent) experience physical insecurity in their lives.
- Only 57 percent of Boys & Girls Club of the Tennessee Valley youth report feeling safe overall.

The lack of feeling emotionally and physically safety stems from several sources. More than three-quarters of the youth we serve are economically disadvantaged and reside in impoverished and often high-crime communities. Further, many youth served at our Clubs come from families whose parents experience financial instability, domestic violence and substance abuse issues, which causes disconnection from their children. Everyday grief is a significant factor in the lives of the youth we serve.

Activity Description:

Boys & Girls Clubs of the Tennessee Valley has an ongoing initiative for social and emotional wellness supporting youth and families in preventing and mitigating the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences. Within this initiative, Be There has supported the expansion of this work to the specific needs of grief and loss. This support is available to all Club members and families, as well as Club staff. Club staff are beginning to be trained in improving our trauma informed care practices, including how to respond to youth and families experiencing every day grief and bereavement. The Social and Emotional Wellness Initiative staff and interns have developed community partnerships for personalized referrals to community agencies as needs arise, and social work interns are trained to offer direct solutions and focused brief support within the Club setting.

Activity Outcomes:

2016-17

- Sixty-five members received one-on-one support as needed, or ongoing mentorship and counseling from the Social and Emotional Wellness team of Boys & Girls Clubs of the Tennessee Valley.
- Thirty-two youth participated in the Ready, Set, Action curriculum, developing social and emotional wellness skills of self-awareness, self-control, perseverance and teamwork.
- Eight youth participated in an eight-week equine assisted and art therapy program at Mane Support entitled, "Transitioning from Loss to Learning: A Curriculum for Loss, Learning and Healing."
- Twenty-three Club staff were trained in a half-day BGCA workshop on supporting youth who are grieving.
- Four Club sites received training to further expand their trauma informed care practices related to either suicide prevention, adverse childhood experiences and/or responding to grief.

One particular success story arose out of the Regal Entertainment Teen Center. Fourteen teen girls completed the Ready, Set, Action curriculum and developed relationships with our Social and Emotional Wellness staff. Within this group of brilliant young ladies was Mia, a sixth grader who was living in a separated family. As Mia prepared to move to a new school and new home, she was feeling isolated from peers. When she initially approached us for support, Mia refused to be a part of the group stating she did not "like to socialize" and expressed a belief that "no one liked her anyway." Through supportive, but informal conversations with our social worker intern, Mia decided to give the group a try. Within weeks she was creating stronger connections with peers and coming out of her protective shell. She was first observed giving input to help the group solve problems and then began to increasingly laugh and smile. Mia's anticipatory grief about moving deepened, but with her new relationship with our social worker, she sought out support to manage the undesired changes in her life. According to Mia, "I improved in my social skills...I started talking with people more without sitting in the corner not wanting to do anything."

Success Story: Grow Together

Need:

According to the domain - Do Something.org - military families relocate, on average, every two to three years. More than two million of these families have children who have had a parent deployed at least once since 2001. Thirty-seven percent of these children reported they seriously worry about what could happen to their deployed caretaker. As a unique Club on a military installation in San Diego, California we are dedicated to "serving those who serve." Through partnering with the New York Life Foundation, the Boys & Girls Club of Miramar has seen the influential role the Be There initiative has played within our community.

Activity Description:

By recognizing the needs of our members, the Boys & Girls Club of Miramar was given the opportunity for all Club members and their families to participate in an ongoing peer grief support and resiliency-building program called Ready, Set, Action. Club staff have been thoroughly trained on how to work with youth who have experienced grief. Every Tuesday over a span of twelve sessions, this program helped members participate in routine activities that promoted self-awareness, self-control, build teamwork and perseverance. Members collectively acquired these new skills to better manage bereavement or learn resiliency skills.

In addition to running Ready, Set, Action every week, our Club hosts a Family Fun Night, every first Friday of the month. For our April Family Fun Night, marketed as "Grow Together," our Club paired with a community partner - Elizabeth Hospice. At this event, families decorated terracotta flowerpots together and had a chance to visit an informational booth to receive a pack of flower seeds. Seeding a stronger foundation for member and family support, the informational booth provided emotional and stress health-related services, as well as resource packets, and an expert to speak with. Paralleling the notion of growing together as a family to flowers, our larger than life - bug's life themed event - allowed families to tap into an additional community resource for mentorship.

Activity Outcomes:

Identifying the diverse needs of our Club, our staff, Club members, families and community partners came together to create a solid network of peer-grief support. More than twenty staff members attended a one-day Saturday training focused on bereavement and grief support. After the training, staff applied their knowledge of grief into their daily conversations with members and weekly programming. A monthly event was hosted by the center where mental health resources were promoted. Informational resource packets were made to be readily available to families. Nine Club members, ages 10-13, reported feeling safer, calmer and more comfortable applying the knowledge they learned into their daily lives. The highlighted accomplishments achieved through implementing the Be There initiative, showcases the progress and impact the initiative has within our Club, community, staff and its members.

SUPPORT KIT: RESPONDING TO LOSS AND GRIEF IN YOUR CLUB

Response Protocol to Support Clubs Experiencing a Loss

Every Club is different and every circumstance is distinct. Whether a Club member or staff dies or the community experiences a tragedy or crisis, we want you to feel equipped to respond. Below are a few helpful tips to support your grieving youth, staff and families when your Club experiences a loss.

Determine who needs to be notified immediately

- Reach out to BGCA Child & Club Safety Director, Mitru Ciarlante: MCiarlante@BGCA.org.
- BGCA, administrative staff, CPO, Board, parents.
- Talk to the CPO about preparing a public statement from the Club if necessary.
- Send a letter to the parents (see Appendix with sample letter to parents).

Communicate with your staff

- Communicate with your staff as soon as you find out about a tragedy.
- Have a staff meeting in the Club before members arrive, if possible.
- Send a letter to all staff so that no one is missed (see Appendix with sample letter to staff).
- Already have identified community grief partners to bring in to speak to staff.
- Give staff an opportunity to feel and process.
- Evaluate staff who were closest to the member and may need time off.
- Consider having a break time between the Club's normal operations.
- Consider bringing in other staff members from different units to support and give relief.
- Determine if anyone is in crisis and needs a referral immediately.

Share with your members

- Determine how you will share the news – age specific small groups, full Club (see Appendix information for members).
- Ensure that there are age-appropriate conversations and opportunities to express feelings of grief (see resources: Developmental Grief Responses and Talking with Children about Grief).
- Have a youth grief partner on site to talk with members.
- Determine if anyone is in crisis and needs a referral immediately.

Supporting the family

- Call the family who experienced loss.
- Connect them to a grief support partner.
- Access support grief materials to give to the youth and family immediately.
- Contact BGCA to send bereavement materials to support the family (see bereavement materials).
- Think about how your Club can provide support and ongoing care for the grieving family (see resources: Supporting Families Who are Grieving: Guidelines for Giving Help).

Providing ongoing support for youth, staff and families

- Recognize that grief is ongoing and will continue to affect staff, youth and families.
- Build support systems within the programs for youth to check in and share how they are feeling.
- Decide how your Club could honor or memorialize the loved one
- Host a support group with your local grief partner for youth who want to participate.
- Be aware of common grief responses for youth and recognize if there are ongoing unhealthy responses (see resources: Developmental Grief Responses and Talking with Children about Grief).
- Have a grief support partner revisit regularly in the aftermath.

10 Ways to Help Grieving Members

1. TAKE CARE OF YOU: As Club staff, you have to remember to take care of your own mental, physical and emotional well being. Grieving members will do better when they have a healthy adult providing a supportive relationship.

2. BE HONEST WITH MEMBERS: Discuss the member's grief in a simple, honest, direct and age appropriate manner. Members need to build supportive relationships with staff.

3. LISTEN: Listen to a member share their story about what happened. Let them ask you questions and answer their questions as best as you can. Do not be afraid to say, "I don't know."

4. RECOGNIZE A MEMBER'S GRIEF: Recognize when a member is grieving. It is normal for youth to feel an array of emotions, including sadness, anger, frustration and fear and to move in and out grief reactions or act like nothing happened. Try to engage one-on-one with a member if you are not sure how their grief is impacting them. Playing with them, doing an art project or sharing stories may help.

5. SHARE: Share stories about times in your life when you were afraid, sad or angry and how you dealt with these situations and what you learned. Sharing your stories can help normalize what the member is feeling and give them hope that things will get better.

6. BE CREATIVE: Clubs create a fun, safe and positive environment for members. Continue to give members a creative outlet through games and activities where they can express their feelings.

7. MAINTAIN CLEAR EXPECTATIONS: Clubs consistently communicate expectations and opportunities to members. Keep the rules and boundaries in your Club consistent. Youth may use their grief as an excuse for inappropriate behavior. While you should acknowledge the grief, you should remind them good character development and leadership means being accountable no matter how they feel.

8. REASSURE THE MEMBER: Remind the member that you care about them. A child experiencing grief or loss may have their sense of security shaken and need supportive relationships.

9. HELP THE MEMBER CREATE MEMORIES TO HONOR THEIR GRIEF: Rituals or traditions can give members tangible ways to acknowledge their grief or honor the memory of someone they lose. Help the member decide which rituals or traditions they can create to help them express their grief.

10. BE PATIENT: Be patient when a member experiences grief. Grief can change us in many ways. A member may need more individualized attention while they are grieving as they continue to grow.

Talking to Members about Death and Loss

INITIATING THE CONVERSATION

Members may feel uncomfortable having conversations about death and asking questions. As Club staff, having positive supportive relationships with members can help them feel supported and allow them to safely express their fears and ask questions. Not encouraging members to express themselves may lead them to think that no one cares about them. Speaking up lets them know that you acknowledge their grief and you want to provide support to them however you can. Here are some general steps and approaches that you can take to begin the conversation with a member who has experienced loss:

- Express your concern:** Acknowledge the loss and let the member know you can offer support.
- Be genuine:** Be authentic and honest about your feelings.
- Invite the conversation:** Use simple open-ended questions like "How are you doing?"
- Listen and observe:** Listen and observe reactions in a non-judgmental manner.
- Limit personal sharing:** Limit your personal experiences and focus on the member.
- Offer practical advice:** Focus on giving advice that feels appropriate to the situation.
- Offer reassurance:** Let members know you will be there to help them cope.
- Continue contact:** Continue to monitor how the member is coping.

WAYS TO RESPOND

Many well-meaning statements may not be as helpful to grieving members. Below are commonly used expressions of support and alternative statements that may be more supportive.

Instead of Saying This	Say This Instead
"I know just what you are going through." (Everyone's grief experience is unique)	"Can you tell me more about what it's been like for you?"
"I know this is hard, but it's important to remember the good things in life too." (It's okay for them to express however they are feeling)	"What kinds of memories do you have about the person who you lost?"
"I lost [someone] too when I was your age." (Focus on the person's experience)	"Tell me more what this has been like for you."
"You'll need to be strong for your family." (Everyone should be able to grieve)	"How is your family doing? What concerns do you have about them?"
"My dog died last week, I know how you feel." (Focus on the person's loss by not comparing)	"I know how I've felt losing someone I love, but don't know how you are feeling. Do you want to share?"
"At least they are no longer in pain." (Focus on not minimizing the experience)	"What have you been thinking about since you lost your loved one?"

Adapted from Coalition to Support Grieving Students <https://GrievingStudents.org>

Developmental Approaches to Grief

There is no one way to grieve and each member will grieve differently. The age and development level of a member can influence their understanding and reaction to grief and loss. Their responses influence the ability of staff to provide a safe and supportive environment for grieving members. Below is a grief approach guide by developmental level that can help Club staff support grieving members.

Age	Reaction to Grief and Loss	Grief Approach by Club Staff
2-4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of understanding about death and related concepts• Sees death as reversible, not permanent• Most aware of changes in patterns of care• May ask questions repeatedly• May regress, wet the bed or change their sleeping patterns; generally irritable• Common statements: "Did you know my mom died, when will she be home?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide short honest answers• Frequently repeat what happened• Provide constant reassurance and nurturing• Provide consistent routines• Provide constant opportunities for play which will be their primary outlet for grief
4-7 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Death still seen as reversible• May blame themselves because of their own thoughts and wishes• Concerned with the process of death and loss, like how and why; general confusion• May also have repetitive questions• May act like nothing has happened• May have nightmares, engage in violent play or take on the role of the person they lost• Common statements: "It's my fault. I was mad and wished she'd die."	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage members in play focused on drawings and stories• Encourage expression of energy and feelings through play involving physical activity• Encourage members to talk about how they are feeling and their loss
7-11 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Death seen as punishment and starting to see it as final; fear of bodily harm• Starting to mourn and understand it• May have school problems, eat and sleep disturbed and withdraw from friends• May have death thoughts and the desire to join the person they lost or self-harm• Common statements: "How do I respond?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage expression of feelings verbally or through writing or drawing• Explain options and allow for choices• Be there to give support but allow alone time• Allow time for play involving physical activity• Listen and make time to talk about loss
11-18 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understands death and mourning• May have sadness or denial and engage in risk taking; more willing to talk to others• Can have anger and act out• May have suicidal thoughts• May have role confusion and reject former teachings about death• Common statements: "They are gone, I don't care anymore, what's the point?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage verbal expression of feelings• Allow for choices• Encourage self-motivation by having them create their own project at the Club• Be available and listen• Do not minimize grief or take it away

Adapted from The Dougy Center "Developmental Grief Responses" <http://www.Dougy.com/Grief/Development-Grief-Responses>

Helping Teen Members Cope With Grief and Loss

Helping teen members grieve may require Club staff to use different strategies to meet their developmental needs. Teen members will have a better understanding about death and mourning and may engage in more risk-taking activities and have a higher propensity for suicide and rage than other age groups. Here are some practices to remember when specifically engaging with teen members:

Ways Grief May Impact Teens

Many Teens Are Told To Be Strong. Adults can often discourage teens from grieving or being sad and may feel pressure not to show their grief because they have to remain strong.

Teen Years Can Be Naturally Difficult. This age group is filled with change as teens leave the security of childhood and adolescence to find their own identity and become more independent. The death of a loved one may be particularly devastating as they work on processing their emotions.

Relationship Conflicts May Exist. As teens work to find their own independence, it is normal that relationship conflicts with family members may occur. A teen member may be even more impacted if they lose a loved one during a period of unresolved conflict.

Teens May Take On the Roles of The Family They Lost.

As teens get older, they have more family responsibilities and obligations. Instead of taking the time to grieve the person they lose, they may try to take on more adult responsibilities in the household.

Teens May Be Surrounded By More Sudden Deaths. Teens may experience death on a more frequent basis as they age, which could result in prolonged and heightened grieving.

Signs a Teen Member May Need Extra Help

Although there are many ways to grieve, there may be signs indicating that a teen needs more support:

- Symptoms of chronic depression, sleeping difficulties, restlessness and low self-esteem.
- Academic failure or indifference to school-related activities
- Deterioration of relationships with family and friends.
- Engagement in risk-behaviors such as substance use, fighting or experimenting sexually.
- Denying being in pain while simultaneously acting overly strong or mature.

Strategies to Help Teen Members

As with all Club members, being honest and direct and allowing teens to express their emotions and listening to them is crucial. Some additional tips to remember:

- Create a one-on-one interaction with the grieving member so they can feel supported.
- Allow the member to have choices in their activities, but also recognize their need for privacy.
- Create opportunities for the teen to have leisure time and a quiet space to process.
- Recognize any achievements or small milestones they have made.
- Give the teen a leadership role in the Club by seeking their input or asking them to help with a project.

Adapted from BGCA "Helping Teenagers Cope With Grief" from www.BGCA.net and "Tips for Supporting the Grieving Teen" from The Dougy Center at <http://www.Dougy.org/Grief-Resources/Tip-Sheets/Tips-For-Supporting-Grieving-Teens/1695/>

Talking With Members about Tragic Events

Children are better able to cope with traumatic events if they have support from trusted adults and friends. Club staff can help ensure members that the Club still remains a positive safe space. Here are some tips to keep in mind that may be useful when talking to members about tragic events such as mass shootings, community violence, plane crashes or natural disasters.

- **Don't project your own fears onto members.** It is natural for staff to feel vulnerable and scared when tragic events occur, but it's important not to overwhelm members with emotions and to remain calm and in control. Members will often take emotional cues from adults. If trusted adults appear to be nervous or scared, they will too.
- **Manage the flow of information.** Over exposure to the tragedy can be overwhelming for members and can fuel their fear. In the Clubs try to avoid having TV's on stations that continue to report the event, and monitor how members share information on social media. Don't minimize the event, but try to limit their exposure in the Clubs as much as you can.
- **Be open to answering questions.** Club members may ask why this happened and seek to understand the impact on their life. Staff members do not have to have all the answers, but encouraging members to express their feelings and being open and honest will continue to instill their trust.
- **Remind members about trustworthy adults in their lives.** Reassure members that before the tragedy occurred, they have trustworthy and supportive adults in their lives who are still working to keep them safe. Accepting their feelings and communicating with them will demonstrate that you are there.

There are some Club activities that may help support members and help them process the tragedy.

- **Restore hope in the future.** Help members regain faith in the future by planning a small activity that will take place in the future so they have something to look forward to.
- **Work with the family.** Engage families to ensure members are getting balanced meals and enough rest. Also, if a member is displaying signs of continued distress, inform the family and provide grief support resources.
- **Encourage creative projects.** Have members draw or send pictures or letters to those affected by the tragedy, or paint or draw pictures to show how they feel and hang them in your Club.
- **Provide relaxing play activities.** Providing activities where members can use their hands, such as playing with play dough or clay, or having them create their own stress balls can help relieve tension. Creating music with instruments or rhythm toys can also help relieve stress.
- **Read stories with happy endings.** Continue to instill hope and read stories or provide books with happy endings or books about how people cope with grief. Go to www.FEMA.gov/Kids/tch_bks.tm.
- **Have discussion groups.** Teen members especially may be more willing to talk about how they feel with other members and share their thoughts. Also work with teens on activities that may help younger members with coping.

Youth and Suicide

Youth suicide is a national problem. Youth who are experiencing grief, loss or a traumatic experience may also be more at risk for committing suicide. It is important as a Club professional to be able to communicate with members if you think they may be suicidal. It's normal to feel anxiety or discomfort when approaching a member you are concerned about. The goal is not to take on their problems or have all the right answers, but to show honest compassion to get them the help they need.

Warning Signs To Look Out For

The first step in helping may be as simple as learning the FACTS or warning signs. The following signs may mean that a member is at risk for suicide, particularly if they have attempted suicide in the past or have developed a specific plan. Perceived stressful situations can also serve as a trigger for suicide.

Feelings: Expressing hopelessness about the future.

Actions: Displaying severe or overwhelming pain or distress.

Changes: Showing abrupt changes in behavior including withdrawal, anger, hostility, changes in appearance and sleeping habits, substance use or continual complaints about a physical ailment.

Threats: Talking or writing about death, or making plans for suicide.

Situations: Experiencing stressful situations such as getting into trouble, loss, change or humiliation.

Ways You Can Communicate Your Support

As Club staff, you can help through LEARN by communicating with a member who may show warning signs. Approach the member and state the specific behavior you are concerned about.

Listen: Listen and show your concern and demonstrate that you are truly listening.

Express: Express that they are important to you as well as to their family.

Ask: Ask if they have been thinking about suicide and if they have developed a plan.

Remind: Remind them that feeling sad changes over time and develop an action plan with them.

Notice: Notice if the warning signs don't cease and continue to check in with the member.

Linking A Member With Care

After creating an action plan that can be followed together, follow your response protocol to make the appropriate contacts. Contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8225). Website: www.SuicidePreventionLifeline.org. If the member is in immediate danger, call 911.

Resource adapted from American Counseling Association "Suicide Prevention Tip Sheet" at <http://www.Counseling.org/Docs/Default-Source/Communications-/Suicide-Prevention-Final.PDF?sfvrsn=2> and The Trevor Project at <http://www.TheTrevorProject.org/Pages/Suicide-Prevention-Resources>

Steps to Take After a Suicide

General Guidelines:

- Treat all Club member deaths in the same way. Having one approach for a member who dies of cancer (for example) and another for a member who dies by suicide reinforces the unfortunate stigma that still surrounds suicide and may be deeply and unfairly painful to the deceased member's family and close friends.
- At the same time, be aware that adolescents are vulnerable to the risk of suicide contagion (one suicide contributing to another). It is important not to simplify, glamorize or romanticize the member or his/her death.
- Emphasize that the member who died by suicide was likely struggling with a mental disorder, such as depression or anxiety, that can cause substantial psychological pain but may not have been apparent to others (or that may have shown as behavior problems or substance abuse).
- Help is available for any member who may be struggling with mental health issues or suicidal feelings.

What to do:

- **Tell the truth**
 - Be honest with children and teens.
 - Start with a short explanation of what happened, and share information about depression and mental illness.
 - Let their questions guide how much detail you provide.
- **Expect and allow for different emotions and feelings**
 - Emotions may include anger, frustration, guilt, numbness, shock, sadness, relief, confusion, shame, fear, loneliness and embarrassment.
- **Talk openly about suicide**
 - Give youth safe places where they can talk openly about the death without judgment and awkwardness.
- **Hold a memorial service**
 - Give youth the opportunity to say goodbye and honor the person's life.
- **Talk about and remember the person who died**
 - Remembering is a part of the grieving process.
- **Address youths' fears**
 - Listen to youths' questions and concerns.
 - Offer reassurance without making promises like "This will never happen again."
- **Inform the child's school about the death**
 - Talk with your child about what they would like in terms of sharing the news with their classmates and others in the school.
 - Inform a child's teacher, counselor, coaches and any adult support person in the school setting about the death.
- **Provide different outlets for grieving**
 - Children may be inclined to express their grieving through play, physical activity or art, instead of talking about their grief.
 - Respect different grieving styles.

Resource adapted from American Foundation for Suicide Prevention & Suicide Prevention Resource Center "After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools" at <http://www.SPRC.org/Sites/Default/Files/Migrate/Library/AfterASuicideToolkitForSchools.PDF>.

Resource adapted from the Dougy Center <https://www.Dougy.org/Index.PHP/Grief-Resources/Tip-Sheets/Page/P4>.

What to Say Following a Suicide

What to Say to Teens:

Give accurate information about suicide by saying:

"The cause of _____'s death was suicide. Suicide is most often caused by serious mental disorders like depression, combined with other complications."

"_____ was likely struggling with a mental health issue like depression or anxiety, even though it may not have been obvious to other people."

"There are treatments to help people who are having suicidal thoughts."

"Since 90 percent of people who die by suicide have a mental disorder at the time of their death, it is likely that _____ suffered from a mental disorder that affected [his/her] feelings, thoughts and ability to think clearly and solve problems in a better way."

"Mental disorders are not something to be ashamed of, and there are very good treatments to help the symptoms go away."

Address blaming and scapegoating by saying:

"The reasons that someone dies by suicide are not simple, and are related to mental disorders that get in the way of the person thinking clearly. Blaming others - or blaming the person who died - does not acknowledge the reality that the person was battling a mental disorder."

Do not focus on the method or graphic details by saying:

"It is tragic that he died by hanging. Let's talk about how _____'s death has affected you and ways for you to handle it."

"How can we figure out the best ways to deal with our loss and grief?"

Address anger by saying:

"It is OK to feel angry. These feelings are normal and it doesn't mean that you didn't care about _____. You can be angry at someone's behavior and still care deeply about that person."

Address feelings of responsibility by saying:

"This death is not your fault."

"We can't always predict someone else's behavior."

"We can't control someone else's behavior."

Encourage help-seeking by saying:

"We are always here to help you through any problem, no matter what. Who are the people you would go to if you or a friend were feeling worried or depressed or had thoughts of suicide?"

"There are effective treatments to help people who have mental disorders or substance abuse problems. Suicide is never an answer."

"This is an important time for all in our [school, team, etc.] community to support and look out for one another. If you are concerned about a friend, you need to be sure to tell a trusted adult."

What to Say Following a Suicide

What to Say to Children:

Give accurate information about suicide by saying:

"Many people who die of suicide struggle with a mental illness called depression. Depression is when a person feels very, very, very sad and doesn't feel that there is anything they can do to make life better, so they do something to kill themselves. Usually people with depression do not kill themselves, but sometimes they do. However, there is always another choice."

"There are a lot of reasons why people die by suicide. Some people feel so sad, angry or confused they do not want to live any more. Killing yourself is never a good thing. It makes your family and friends feel very sad. You can find help for your problems and your sadness. You can find people who will care for you."

"People who die by suicide don't realize how sad their family will be. Sometimes they think their family will be glad that they are dead. That is never, never what happens. A family is always, always sad and wish they could have helped the person."

"Some people's bodies get sick and don't work right. Sometimes a person's mind doesn't work right. They can't see things clearly and they feel the only way to solve their problems is to take their lives – to kill themselves. However, this is never a solution to problems; the only reason they thought of it is that they weren't thinking very clearly."

Address feelings of responsibility by saying:

"This death is not your fault."

"Nothing you said or did could have stopped it."

Address emotions by saying:

"Suicide causes many feelings such as anger, sadness, loneliness, guilt and confusion. These feelings are normal and should be shared with an adult."

Resource adapted from American Foundation for Suicide Prevention & Suicide Prevention Resource Center "After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools" at <http://www.SPRC.org/Sites/Default/Files/Migrate/Library/AfterASuicideToolkitForSchools.PDF>

Resource adapted from "How Do We Tell The Children?" by Dan Schaefer and Christine Lyons and "Explaining Suicide to Children" by Kate's Club at <http://KatesClub.org/WP-Content/Uploads/2015/11/Explaining-Suicide-to-Children.PDF>

Supporting Youth with an Addicted Family Member

Youth who grow up with an addicted family member are at significant risk of developing their own addiction, either as a teen or adult. Currently there are 20 million Americans who are living with their own addiction and another 100 million family members impacted by the addiction of someone they love. More than nine million children in the United States are living in a home with a parent who uses illicit drugs. Many of these children struggle in school, develop physical and emotional issues and witness, or are the target of family violence or sexual abuse.

- Children impacted by a family member's addiction are at far greater risk than peers to suffer from depression and anxiety as well as health and learning challenges.
- Children living with an addicted family member are four times more likely to develop a future addiction of their own.

Many children who grow up with addiction in their family feel responsible for their family member's substance use disorder. They often say things like, "If I didn't laugh so loud or didn't fight with my siblings, my mom or dad wouldn't use drugs or alcohol."

The Moyer Foundation has developed 7 C's to support youth with an addicted family member. The first half of the 7 C's stress that children are not responsible for the family member's substance use or misuse. The remaining 7 C's focus on healthy coping skills such as communicating feelings and the importance of self-care. This is an important message to communicate to youth to support them in coping with their grief:

The 7 C's:

I didn't **CAUSE** it
I can't **CONTROL** it
I can't **CURE** it
BUT
I can take **CARE** of myself
By **COMMUNICATING** my feelings
making good **CHOICES** and
CELEBRATING myself

Adapted from The Moyer Foundation support resources <https://MoyerFoundation.org/>.

Camp Mariposa is an innovative program from The Moyer Foundation. It a national addiction prevention and mentoring program for youth who have been impacted by substance abuse in their families. Camp Mariposa is offered free of charge to all families.

For more information about Camp Mariposa, please visit: <https://MoyerFoundation.org/>.

Supporting Youth after the Overdose Death of a Loved One

The number of overdose deaths in the United States is at an all-time high. It can be difficult to wrap our minds around the idea of explaining a drug-related death to children. An overdose death is sudden and complicated by nature. Similar to suicide death, we often feel that the overdose death was preventable. This can create a myriad of feelings in both adults and children including: Guilt, anger, blame, worry, social isolation and anguish about "why."

Below are guidelines we can use to address this sensitive topic:

- **Take care of yourself first:** Take a couple of deep breaths and give yourself time to collect your thoughts. Think of this initial conversation as laying the groundwork, allowing the child to ask questions and exploring what the child is thinking. It is not the time to share all of the available information.
- **Start the conversation:** It may be uncomfortable and difficult to know where to start, but take the step. Sometimes beginning with a question is easier. For example, "What have you been thinking about Matt's death?" invites the child to share what is going on inside.
- **Name your feelings, but try to keep them in check:** Kids will be able to read your face – why is mommy looking so different? Why is grandpa shaking? When we process difficult news, we experience waves of feelings. After all, we are human. Name the feeling – "I am feeling really sad right now."
- **Stick to routines:** This is easier said than done, especially if it is the death of someone vital to your family's day-to-day life. By definition, a traumatic loss disrupts routine, but if you can, keep basics steady – and ask for help from friends or family if you need it.
- **Talk about the person who died in a caring and respectful way:** "_____ (insert name here) died by an overdose, but this does not define who he or she was." Just as a period does not define a sentence, the cause of death does not define a person. He or she is not "an overdose" but a person who died by an overdose.

- **Keep it clear:** Try to use language that is appropriate to your child's age, level of understanding and previous knowledge of the situation.
- **Avoid assigning fault and blame:** Underline that it is not anyone's fault that this person died – and that the death is certainly not the child's fault.
- **Guide children in learning to share appropriately:** Children may need assistance in sharing with others what has happened or, in "clinical language," creating their "own narrative." Let them know that sharing does not mean telling everything – it is not a lie to keep some areas private.
- **Remember, it is not a "one-and-done" when talking about traumatic loss:** Let children know that they can ask questions and that you may not have all the answers, but that any questions are OK to ask.
- **Model self-care:** "When I am sad and upset, I like to exercise and talk with friends ...what helps you?" Encourage kids to draw, talk and dance – anything to move their feelings from entirely internal to external. Teach them that asking for help is a sign of strength.

Be sure to remind the child that if they ever struggle with their feelings, there is always help available. You might help them to identify the people around them who are available to lend a listening ear during difficult times. It is also helpful to work with them to discover what safe activities bring them a sense of comfort and control when they are distressed, such as drawing pictures of their feelings, petting their cat or sleeping with a beloved stuffed animal.

Substance abuse and overdose loss are complicated topics and difficult even for sensitive and attuned parents. Please reach out to a mental health provider if you need additional support or if you have ongoing concerns. Remember, it is a sign of health to ask for guidance in times of need.

Supporting Youth Who Have an Incarcerated Parent

Boys & Girls Club staff are caring adults committed to creating a safe environment and building supportive relationships. Club staff can play an important role in addressing the needs of children of incarcerated parents. Staff can help improve outcomes for the children of incarcerated parents by using research-based practices and effective support.

- Children who have an incarcerated parent are at heightened risk for exposure to substance abuse, mental illness and inadequate education before their parent's incarceration.
- The risk of children living in poverty or experiencing household instability increases with parental incarceration.
- Parental incarceration is recognized as an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE); it is distinguished from other ACEs by the combination of trauma, shame and stigma.
- Youth developmental stages influence the experiences and effects of incarceration on children who have a parent in prison.

Ages 2-6: Separation anxiety, impaired social-emotional development, traumatic stress and guilt for surviving

Ages 7-10: Developmental regression, poor self-concepts, acute traumatic stress reactions, impaired ability to overcome future trauma

Ages 11-14: Rejection of limits to behavior and trauma-reactive behaviors

Ages 15-18: Premature termination of dependency relationship with parent

Remember:

- Every family's experience is different. Some children lived with their incarcerated parent before their parent's incarceration and others did not. Some children had a close relationship with that parent (regardless of whether they lived together) and others may not have. It is important not to make any assumptions.
- Be aware of what researchers call the "conspiracy of silence." Sometimes caregivers instruct children not to discuss the situation with anyone, for fear of the stigma and shame associated with incarceration. Children, too, may worry about people judging their parent. However, not understanding, or not being able to talk about the situation can also be a source of stress for children. Sometimes the silence around the situation can become an inadvertent cause of shame. It is important for mentors to understand this dynamic and to signal to their mentees that they can be trusted and will not judge the child or their parent.
- Keep in mind that a parent's crime or the fact that he or she is incarcerated does not indicate what kind of parent that individual was before incarceration, nor does it necessarily speak to a child's relationship with that parent. Further, it is not a sign of the type of parent someone will be after release.



How Can Staff Support Youth Who Have an Incarcerated Parent?

Establish Understanding

- Recognize that children of incarcerated parents may have difficulty trusting new adults. Since many have suffered a traumatic and sudden separation from their parent, they may be slow to trust new adults in their lives for fear that these people could also leave.
- Recognize that young people who have an incarcerated parent face different realities regarding their situation, ranging from not knowing about the incarceration to having witnessed an arrest, and wondering whether it is their fault. Reinforce that the incarceration is not their fault.
- Understand that it is the youth's decision to share details about their parent's absence. It is best not to ask. They may choose to tell you, but it is not important to the staff/youth relationship.

Develop the Relationship

- Take the time to learn about the youth by talking about interests, family and other topics based on your comfort level. While getting to know the youth, be aware of potential sensitivities when talking about families. It is not necessary to avoid the topic of having an incarcerated parent, but be sensitive and avoid making assumptions.
- Spend time doing activities that interest the child and expose him or her to new things and places, (e.g., sports, games, arts, crafts, field trips to museums) while being sensitive to how the youth might feel when out of his or her comfort zone and in unfamiliar surroundings.
- Share stories and information about your own life experiences, including successes and challenges experienced along the way. If relevant, you may share your own experiences with having an absent parent, but keep in mind that having an incarcerated parent may be a different experience than other kinds of absence.

- Help the youth understand that a parent's incarceration does not have to be the end of the relationship between him or her and the absent parent.
- Understand the barriers your youth may face in maintaining or building a relationship with their incarcerated parent. These may include finances, communication, visitation/transportation, time commitments such as education and employment, and the desires of the incarcerated parent and/or caregiver.
- Recognize and acknowledge that there will be a transition period and the new circumstances may present challenges for the youth, parent and caregiver. Keep in mind that:
 - **A youth** might have to adapt to having both parents as caregivers. Differences in parenting philosophies and choices can be sources of stress and conflict for the whole family.
 - **Possible** custody hearings or other proceedings may be difficult.
 - **The homecoming** may not live up to expectations. The recently released parent may not want the child to have a mentor.

Support Resources:

Supporting Children and Families of Prisoners. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Children's Bureau.

<https://www.ChildrenWelfare.gov/Topics/Supporting-Services/Prisoner/>

Meeting the Needs of Children With an Incarcerated Parent
American Bar Association.

<http://APPS.AmericanBar.org/Litigation/Committees/ChildRights/Content/Articles/Spring2012-0212-Incarcerated-Parents-Child-Development.htm>

Adapted from "Tip Sheet for Mentors: Supporting Children Who Have Incarcerated Parents"

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Supporting Youth who Experience a Traumatic Loss

What is Traumatic Loss?

"A death is considered traumatic if it occurs without warning; if it is untimely; if it involves violence; if there is damage to the loved one's body; if it was caused by a perpetrator with the intent to harm; if the survivor regards the death as preventable; if the survivor believes that the loved one suffered; or if the survivor regards the death, or manner of death, as unfair and unjust." **Wortman & Latack (2015)**



Additional examples of traumatic losses:

- Community violence
- Homicide or violent death
- Childhood victimization
- Physical or sexual assault
- Natural disasters
- Circumstances in which the survivor witnessed the death
- When their own life was threatened
- When the mourner experiences multiple deaths
- Sudden death

In addition to the nature of the death, other trauma risk factors include:

- Media attention
- Limited opportunities for social support
- Being blamed for the death
- Prolonged court proceedings
- Having a prior history trauma

What is the impact of experiencing a traumatic loss?

Generally speaking, it has been shown that traumatic death, especially violent deaths, lead to increased distress. When someone experiences a traumatic death, their challenges become two-fold. One, they must cope with the trauma and two, they have to cope with their grief. The experiences of trauma and grief are two different things unto themselves, yet after a traumatic death, they get thrown into one big emotional blender. Things get tangled, thoughts and emotions get fused. Understandably, it is not uncommon for youth who've experienced a traumatic death to experience significantly more intense, pervasive and prolonged symptoms.

After a Traumatic Loss One May Experience:

Shattered assumptions about the world, themselves and others:

Experiencing a traumatic death, something that feels profoundly meaningless and unjust, can shatter a young person's sense of security and lead to a sense that the world is unsafe and unpredictable, that others are malicious and evil, and that one is powerless in protecting themselves.

Ruminations:

Youth who have experienced a traumatic death might experience increased rumination as they seek to answer questions such as:

- Why did this happen?
- Who is to blame?
- Did my loved one suffer?
- Were they afraid?

Many youth fail to find the answers they are searching for, and they continue to struggle with the senselessness of the death as well as the pain of imagining what it must have been like for their loved one at the time of their death.

Feelings of guilt and self-blame:

Even when a person is clearly not at fault, it is common to struggle with feelings of guilt and self-blame. For example, one might feel guilty for circumstances that preceded the death, but which could have played a part in the chain of events. Negative thoughts about guilt and self-blame can impact how a young person adjusts to bereavement and are often associated with feelings of depression and anxiety.

Poor social support:

Evidence suggests that social support can reduce the impact of stressful life events. Sadly, after a death, many people don't receive effective support for a number of reasons. This is especially true after a traumatic death when the enduring impact of acute grief can last much longer than society has been taught to expect it. A few reasons why people do not receive effective support after a death include:

- People don't know how to provide grief support.
- People make comments that minimize grief, discourage expression of grief and discussion of loved ones, and push mourners to move on.

- The bereaved youth may be inclined to physically and emotionally isolate, especially when they feel misunderstood by others.
- The bereaved youth may feel ashamed, abnormal or weak because they continue to struggle.

After a traumatic loss, it is important to find ways to help youth process and cope with complicated emotions and reactions regarding the death and the trauma.

The following are some recommendations to help staff support youth:

- Give youth the opportunity to share their story and their experiences.
- Don't lie or tell half-truths to children about the tragic event. Lies do not help the youth through the healing process or help develop effective coping strategies for life's future tragedies or losses.
- Help all youth, regardless of age, understand loss and death. Give the youth information at the level that he/she can understand.
- Encourage youth to ask questions about loss and death. Treat questions with respect and a willingness to help the child find his or her own answers.
- Be aware of your own need to grieve. Focusing on the children in your care is important, but not at the expense of your emotional needs.

Adapted:

- What's Your Grief, "Grief After Traumatic Loss," Written by Litsa Williams and Elanor Haley <https://WhatsYourGrief.com/TraumaticLoss/>
- National Association of School Psychologists, "Helping Children Cope with Loss, Death and Grief"

Helping Members Support Other Members

Club members naturally want to help out their friends and are also a source of support for grieving members. Club staff can help guide members by building their capacity to provide this support.

A Grieving Member's Relationship with Other Members

Grieving members may go through a range of emotions, which may include sadness, guilt or shame. They may think something is wrong with them and may withdraw from other members.

Members may have limited experience supporting their friends who are grieving. They may be afraid to say the wrong thing, or also be afraid of losing their own loved ones and may need their own coping support as they try to help the grieving member.

Instead of providing comforting words, insensitive comments may be made, or even teasing or withdrawal from the grieving member in order to cope with their own anxieties. For example, instead of asking a grieving member "I'm afraid my dad may die someday, can you tell me what it's been like for you so I can be better prepared?" A member may state "Your dad died, and now you can't make a Father's Day card."

Skills to Help Equip Members to Help Grieving Members

There are some strategies that Club staff can use to help members be more effective in providing support to a grieving member.

- **Knowledge is power**

Provide information on a very basic level to members about what happened. This will help minimize the amount of repetitive questions members may ask the grieving member.

- **Allow opportunities for questions**

Members will most likely have questions about the death or loss of a grieving member and its impact. They will also want to know how to be helpful. Club staff can discuss the information with other members in small groups or as a large group to help prepare them.

- **Continue to provide a safe, positive environment**

Clubs provide a safe positive environment where members feel physically and emotionally secure. They should also feel safe in sharing their fears and experiences with death and loss.

- **Offer concrete advice and practical suggestions**

Give members examples of ways to start conversations and statements that may be helpful and unhelpful to grieving members. Help them strategize ways they can be supportive and encourage them to continue to interact with the grieving member.

Providing Continued Support

Club staff can play a role in supportive grieving members both immediately after a loss and over time. It can take a lifetime for children to adjust to a major loss, and maintaining a safe, positive environment and a supportive relationship can help them in their coping process. There are steps that Club staff can take to create a supportive environment that can help members during their grieving process.

- **Decrease the sense of isolation**

Club staff can help minimize the isolation that a member may feel by leading dynamic group discussions with other members about grieving and loss.

- **Offer more individualized academic help**

Grieving members may have difficulty concentrating in school and may see a drop in their academic performance. Club staff can provide increased homework help and innovative academic activities that can help a grieving member refocus.

- **Encourage members to talk with their families**

Providing a supportive and caring relationship in the Club may help grieving members feel supported and understood, and also encourage them to talk to their loved ones outside of the Club.

- **Create opportunities that increase support from other members**

Club members create supportive peer relationships with each other. Club staff can implement interactive activities and projects focused on building resiliency and teamwork that can help not only the grieving member, but build coping and support skills for all members.

- **Link members with resources**

A grieving member may experience depression or other issues. As Club staff, remain alert to how a grieving member is coping and connect them with appropriate referrals as needed.

- **Connect with a member about something that is important to them**

Learn about an event, issue or activity that is important to the member and find ways to have conversations with them about it or even do a project together.

- **Remember possible trigger events**

Every member will experience their grief differently, and major events, (e.g., holidays, birthdays) or transitional times, (e.g., new school, first job) may be a trigger. Making special contact with a member during these life events can help them cope and feel supported.

Things to Remember About Children and Grief

- There is no set time frame when a member may stop grieving
- As members get older, different transitions may remind them of their grief
- As members get older, their coping skills and understanding about loss will grow

Club Members and Bereavement: Taking Care of Staff

Club staff are there to support members and to provide them with life-changing programs, fun, enriching experiences and supportive relationships with their peers and caring adults. Because of the huge role staff play in being there for members, it is important for staff to take care of themselves. Providing the best support for staff will help provide support for a grieving member.

Common Triggers for Adults

Providing grief support may be difficult for Club staff and can trigger a range of emotions. Below are common situations where staff may experience triggers that are important to recognize:

- **A past personal experience with childhood grief:** This could cause a staff member to be more empathetic and insightful, but could also rekindle their own sadness and loss as a child.
- **Coping with a serious illness:** A staff member dealing with their own illness may become more anxious about their own health, especially if the loss is similar to their own situation.
- **Having a loved one who is ill:** Having a loved one who is dealing with an illness or who is near death may increase the anxiety and influence responses to a grieving member.
- **New concerns about loved ones:** Even if a member is not dealing with the death or illness of their own loved ones, watching a grieving member may heighten these concerns.

Secondary Traumatic Stress

Secondary traumatic stress is the emotional impact that results when a person hears about the trauma of someone else. It can occur for all Club staff who help members and families through traumatic experiences and impact staff emotionally, mentally and physically. Common symptoms include:

- Feelings of hopelessness
- Guilt
- Sleeplessness
- Chronic exhaustion
- Fear
- Anger
- Cynicism
- Hypervigilance
- Diminished self-care
- Withdrawal

Staff members who are emotionally depleted may be less effective in not only helping a grieving member, but also in serving all members and providing an optimal Club Experience. It is important for a staff member who continuously feels emotionally drained from providing grief support to discuss this with their supervisor and access resources that may help.

Strategies to Support Staff

There is no one way to provide staff support, and a multidimensional approach has been shown to yield the most effective outcomes. It is important for Clubs to provide a holistic approach to wellness that includes a balance of physical and nutritional health with mental and emotional well being for not only Club members, but also for Club staff. Therefore using a multidimensional approach in providing staff support can yield the most effective outcomes. Resources will be used by Club staff depending on their individual needs. Listed are some strategies and approaches that may help with addressing secondary traumatic stress and promoting self-care and resiliency among staff so they can continue to provide support to members.

- Develop a support system for staff that outlines available Club support for staff.
- Emphasize “wellness breaks” or activities where staff members have the space to decompress.
- Provide ongoing skills, training and professional development in grief support.
- Conduct periodic team building and self-care activities for staff.
- Implement a self-care accountability “buddy system” where staff partner up to support.
- Have informal gatherings and debriefing sessions following crisis and traumatic events.
- Create small-group discussion groups for staff to express themselves and their concerns.
- Dedicate time at staff meetings for staff to share how they are feeling.
- Rotate different duties and responsibilities among staff.
- Enhance the physical safety of staff.
- Ensure that staff are aware of BGCA’s Employee Assistance Programs.
- Use reflective supervision when providing supervisory support and consultation.

Self-Care Assessment

All Club staff members have to also be able to take care of themselves and take their own actions when it comes to focusing on their own well being and self-care. There are different self-care activities that staff can participate in on their own that will continue to enhance their overall health and well being. The “Self-Care Assessment Worksheet” can be given to staff where they can assess their own engagement in strategies to maintain self-care and work on areas where they would like to actively work to improve.

Adapted from The Coalition to Support Grieving Students “Professional Self-Care” <https://GrievingStudents.org/> and The National Traumatic Stress Network “Secondary Traumatic Stress: A Fact Sheet for Child Serving Professionals” <http://www.NCTSN.org/Resources/Topics/Secondary-Traumatic-Stress>

Self-Care Assessment Worksheet

This assessment tool lists effective self-care strategies. After completing the assessment, chose focus areas you want to improve. Rate your frequency using this scale: **5**-Frequently **4**-Occasionally **3**-Rarely **2**-Never **1**-Never occurred to me

Physical Self-Care

- Eats regularly (breakfast, lunch and dinner)
- Eats healthy
- Exercise or do a fun physical activity
- Get medical care when needed
- Take time off when needed
- Get massages
- Get enough sleep
- Take mini-vacations
- Wear the clothes that you like
- Other:

Emotional Self-Care

- Spend time with others whose company you enjoy
- Stay in contact with important people in your life
- Give yourself affirmations and praise
- Love yourself
- Allow yourself to cry
- Find things that make you laugh
- Identify and seek out your comfort activities and objects
- Play with Club members
- Other:

Professional Self-Care

- Make a quiet time to complete tasks
- Identify projects that are rewarding
- Arrange your workspace so that it's comforting to you
- Seek professional development opportunities
- Have a staff peer support group
- Take a break during the workday
- Other:

Psychological Self-Care

- Make time for self-reflection
- Write in a journal
- Read non-work related literature
- Decrease stress in your life
- Say "no" sometimes
- Listen to your inner feelings
- Learn something in a new area
- Practice receiving from others
- Let others know your different aspects
- Other:

Spiritual Self-Care

- Make time for reflection
- Find a spiritual connection or community
- Spend time with nature
- Be open to not knowing
- Identify what is meaningful to you
- Volunteer
- Create your own quiet time
- Cherish your optimism and hope
- Other:

Balance

- Strive for work/life balance
- Strive to balance your workload
- Strive for balance among work, play, rest
- Strive to balance your needs and members
- Strive for balance in your relationships
- Balance between your own needs and others
- Other:

Supporting Families Who are Grieving: Guidelines for Giving Help

One of the most important things you can do for families who are grieving is to show you care. Here are some things most families appreciate.

Offer the kind of help that's a good fit for you.

- **Offer to spend time with them.** Listen if they want to talk. Sit quietly if they just want company. Play games if they want to play games.
- **Don't try to take away the grief.** Powerful and painful feelings will be with them for some time. Comments and efforts meant to cheer people up or find something positive in the situation are usually not helpful.
- **Listen more, talk less.** It's fine to share your feelings and express your care and concern. But it's important to keep the focus on the people who are grieving. Allow them to express their own feelings. Don't tell them how they ought to feel.
- **Accept strong expressions of feelings.** This is an important part of grieving. Encouraging people to "be strong" or cover up their feelings isn't helpful.
- **Make contact. Send a card that says you're thinking of them.** Make a brief call. Drop off a gift from the Club or a card from the other members.
- **Accept "no thanks" gracefully.** If a family declines your help for the moment, accept their decision. Be available to support them when they are ready to talk about things.
- **Hang in there. Grieving takes a long time.** Offer support over the coming weeks and months. Pay attention to holidays, birthdays and other special occasions.

Adapted from After a Loved One Dies-How Children Grieve and How Parents and Other Adults Can Support Them
http://www.CT.Gov/DCF/LIB/DCF/Prevention/PDF/After_A_Loved_One_Dies_-_How_Children_Grieve_.PDF

The Importance of Youth at Funerals

A guide to help parents and caregivers understand the vital role memorialization plays in the lives of grieving children.

PLEASE NOTE: This document is intended to familiarize and educate BGCA staff on the struggles that families might face as they come to understand the role memorialization plays in the lives of grieving children. Staff are encouraged to share this guide with parents and caregivers, and support them in the decisions they make that best serve their families.

The death of a loved one is a painful and often overwhelming experience at any age. Amidst coping with their own grief, parents and caregivers are faced with talking to children about death and dying. Adults frequently struggle with the question, "Should my child attend the funeral?"

DEBUNKING COMMON MYTHS

Parents may worry that a child is too young to care about or understand what happens during a funeral or why we have them. They may simply wonder if a child will remember the loved one. Parents may believe that funerals are only for adults because they may be too sad or traumatizing for children, perhaps they think children shouldn't see their parents cry.

It is important to understand that children feel the death of a loved one intensely and often feel forgotten if they are left out of the memorialization process. Exclusion can distress children and may lead them to create fear-based fantasies far scarier than what actually takes place. They may feel resentful for many years if they were not included in an important family event and didn't get to say goodbye to a loved one. They'll also miss out on receiving the comfort and support that connects friends and families during a funeral.

So the answer is **YES**, it is appropriate for children to attend a funeral. Saying goodbye to a loved one who died is never easy, but experts agree that children should be given the choice to attend the funeral and participate in the memorialization process in ways that feel meaningful and important to them.

DISCUSSING DEATH AND FUNERALS

For children to make informed choices, parents and caregivers need to have open, direct and honest conversations with them and prepare them for the funeral service itself. The more open and honest adults are about these events, the more normalized and less scary these experiences become.

Children's reaction to death and the funeral experience will vary depending on age, nature of the relationship with the deceased, maturity level and ability to manage complex emotions. Young children may be confused about where the deceased person has gone and when they are coming back. Teens may be concerned about their ability to control their emotions or how to interact with loved ones of the deceased. Others may be concerned because they simply do not know what to expect or what to do during a funeral or visitation. Adult role modeling serves an important role for helping kids navigate their own way forward.

Parents and caregivers have the most intimate knowledge of their child's demeanor, and it's crucial to understand and support young

people on their unique levels as they go through the experience. Using simple, clear and concrete language is key when discussing terms children may find confusing or scary.

Death

- Keep explanations honest and clear and avoid euphemisms (such as "lost," "asleep" or "passed away") that may confuse children. Simply explain that when someone dies, their body has stopped working and will not start working again. Clarify that a person who has died can no longer breathe, think, talk or feel pain, fear, cold, etc.

Funerals

- A funeral (sometimes referred to as a memorial or celebration of life) is a ritual that helps families and friends express their deepest thoughts and feelings about the person who died. Explain that you will be having a funeral just for your loved one and that everyone will be together to share memories, express how much the person was loved and say a very special goodbye.

Burial

- Explain that at the end of the funeral, the casket will be placed in a special car called a hearse and taken to the cemetery. There will be a very deep hole called a grave. The casket will be lowered into the grave and covered with earth.
- Eventually, grass will grow on top of it and soon a headstone will be put there to mark the place so people can remember where the casket was put into the ground.
- Let the child know that he or she will be able to visit the cemetery to think about and remember the loved one.

Cremation

- Use simple, clear and honest language, avoiding words like "fire" or "burn."
- Tell children that cremation doesn't hurt because after a person dies, they can't feel pain. Explain that the person's body is placed in a special box and then taken to a place called a crematory.
- Inside the crematory, it gets very, very hot, which changes the person's body into soft, fine particles like white or gray sand, called cremated remains.
- The cremated remains are then placed in a special container, often called an urn.
- Discuss that the family might decide to keep the urn in a special



place, bury the cremated remains in a cemetery or scatter them outdoors at a place that was important to the loved one or the family.

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN MEMORIALIZATION

Simply attending the funeral will help children begin processing their grief. If possible, include youth of all ages in the planning of the funeral/memorial service to help them feel connected and involved.

Be sure they understand that at any point, they can change their mind about participation. Let their comfort level be a guide when sharing ideas about how they can express their feelings and honor their loved one.

Consider asking your funeral director or celebrant for suggestions on youth involvement or incorporate some of the following activities:

Prior to the funeral

- Draw a picture or write a letter to be placed into the casket or placed beside the urn.
- Select special photographs or items and help arrange a picture board or memorial table.
- Encourage the sharing of special stories and memories during the activity.

During the funeral

- Greet guests, hand out memorial cards or direct people to the registration book.
- Start the ceremony by placing a flower on the casket or in front of a memorial portrait.
- During the ceremony, share a poem, reading or reflection; sing a song; or play an instrument.
- Hand out flowers after the service or graveside.

PREPARE CHILDREN FOR FUNERAL ATTENDANCE

When young people make the decision to attend a funeral, it's best to explain in advance what they will see, what others may be doing and how they might feel. Even the smallest details will help them feel more comfortable with their decision and prepare for the event.

When children choose not to attend a funeral

If children choose not to attend, let them know what they will be doing instead. Will they stay with a friend or family member? Will there be a babysitter? Will an overnight stay be involved?

Explain the order of the day

- Let them know what to expect and where the event or events will be held. Is there a visitation at the funeral home, a funeral ceremony at a church, a cemetery interment? Will a meal follow? Is the funeral taking place at someone's home or at another venue?

Give them choices and control

- Make certain that children feel empowered throughout the day and support their decisions.
- Let them help select their clothing and choose their favorite food for lunch. Do not force a hug or handshake.
- Assure them that at any point, they can change their mind about attending and participating. Assign a caregiver to leave them with, if necessary.
- If the body is present, give children control over how close they would like to get to the deceased, whether they would like to look at, or touch the person, and how long they want to stay in the room.

Talk about what people will be doing

- Walk them through their role in the memorialization or explain what they can expect to do. Practice their role with them until they are comfortable.

- Explain that people may be waiting in a receiving line to greet the loved one's family or standing/sitting and talking.
- Talk about what will happen at the ceremony. Will there be music? Readings? Sitting? Standing? Will it mirror a religious ceremony they may be familiar with? Who will be the officiant or celebrant? Are there pallbearers and what do they do?

Discuss who and what they might see

- Let them know who their "point person" will be. This individual should be a known and trusted person in the child's life and preferably someone who will not mind leaving the funeral if it becomes necessary.
- Will they see relatives and friends? Will they know many people? Will other children be in attendance? Show photographs to remind them of familiar faces, if possible.
- Talk about the celebration location. Will they see a hearse? A casket? An urn? As appropriate, show photographs of items and places they might see. Consider a visit to the funeral home or venue prior to the funeral.
- Be sure to let them know whether a body will be present or absent and explain in advance what they will see and when they will see it.

When the body is present:

Let children know where the casket will be and whether it will be open – so they can see the person – or closed. Explain that a casket is a special box that their loved one's body will be in and clarify that the person may look like they are sleeping because their eyes will be closed and they will be lying down. Explain that when someone dies, it is not the same as sleeping. Remind them that the person who died can no longer feel cold, hurt or fear. Talk about the color of the casket and what the loved one will be wearing. Describe what may be around the casket (flowers, memorial table, etc.).

When the body is not present:

It is just as important to explain what the child will see when the body isn't present. Explain that there might be a portrait, and urn or a memorial table.

Talk about emotions and how people might be feeling

- Prepare them for how they might feel by talking about sadness and grief. Let them know that people grieve differently and that their emotions might change throughout the day and that that's perfectly OK. Explain that people may be mourning, which is showing an outward expression of grief through an emotion such as crying, while others may be laughing and smiling.

Take grief breaks

- Youth tend to grieve differently from adults and often require "grief breaks" to allow them to manage their emotions in the face of extreme stress. Encourage children to engage with comforting items and activities (a favorite stuffed animal, blanket, books, puzzles) during grief breaks. Children learn through play, and fun and familiar activities can help them process complex feelings.

Normalize the experience

- Children will be looking to parents and caregivers for support and guidance, and a child will notice if an adult is uncomfortable in their grief or during the funeral. Make sure your body language and tone mirror your words of assurance and normalcy.
- Remind children that crying is OK for both children and adults. Say, "It's OK to be nervous or sad or scared today. We're going to feel a lot of different emotions. I'm glad we're here together to say our special goodbyes. It's very important, and it will help us feel much better."

Encourage questions

- Encourage young people to ask questions and share what's on their minds. It is not uncommon for a child to ask the same question again and again. Some questions may be direct and pointed, and it's okay to not be able (or ready) to answer.
- Consider saying, "I'm glad you asked that question. I don't know the answer either. Let's find someone who might be able to answer it for us" or "It's hard for me to answer that right now. Can we please talk about that at a different time soon?"

CONTINUE TO CONNECT

Continue to offer children comfort, love and support in the days, weeks and months following a funeral. Ask them how they are feeling and invite them to share favorite memories of their loved one. Encourage questions and don't forget to address any previous questions you may not have been able (or ready) to answer.

Please reach out to funeral service professionals and grief and bereavement experts in your area to learn about tools and resources that can help you address the unique needs of a grieving child.

The Funeral Service Foundation created this guide in collaboration with funeral service professionals and grief and bereavement experts committed to helping families and caregivers understand the vital role memorialization plays in the lives of children grieving the death of a loved one.

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Grief and Bereavement Resources

Clubs can request that the following resources from BGCA be sent to their grieving members and families:

- After a Loved One Dies-How Children Grieve and How Parents and Other Adults Can Support Them (booklet)
http://www.CT.Gov/DCF/Lib/DCF/Prevention/PDF/After_A_Loved_One_Dies - How Children-Grieve.PDF
- When Families Grieve: A Sesame Street Workshop Creation (booklet and DVD)
<http://www.PBS.org/Parents/WhenFamiliesGrieve>
- When Someone Dies-A Child-Caregiver Activity Book
<https://ChildrenGrieve.org/When-Someone-Dies-Child-Caregiver-Activity-Book>

Online Grief and Bereavement Resources

A list of websites that can further guide your staff to support grieving members and families:

- **A Child in Grief:** Stories and resources on helping with child bereavement: www.AChildInGrief.com
- **The National Alliance for Grieving Children:** List of grief support service providers who serve children, teens and their families: <https://ChildrenGrieve.org>
- **Coalition to Support Grieving Students:** Multimedia resource designed to empower educators and school professionals in their efforts to support grieving students: <https://GrievingStudents.org/>
- **National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement:** Resources for professionals supporting grieving children: <https://SOWKWeb.USC.edu/About/Centers-Affiliations/National-Center-School-Crisis-and-Bereavement>
- **The National Child Traumatic Stress Network:** Provides resources on supporting children who have experienced trauma: <http://www.NCTSnet.org/>
- **The Dougy Center:** Resources for helping with child bereavement: <http://www.Dougy.org/>
- **Moyer Foundation:** Resources for families and professionals, a guide with bereavement organizations listed by state and grief and bereavement camps: <http://MoyerFoundation.org/National-Bereavement-Resource-Guide>
- **Hello Grief:** Youth-oriented online discussion about the impact of loss, and how to help grieving persons cope, as well as build a community of support for those living with grief: <http://www.HelloGrief.org/>
- **Hope After Project:** Community service projects focused on creating positive experiences for those who have experienced grief or loss: <http://www.HopeAfterProject.com/>

Suicide Prevention Resources

- For an immediate crisis, call 911.
- Universal Crisis Lifelines (available 24/7):
 - Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).
 - For Spanish speakers, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-888-628-9454.
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline for Deaf and Hard of Hearing: 1-800-799-4889.
 - Use the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's online chat at <http://www.SuicidePreventionLifeLine.org>.
 - Use the Crisis Text Line by texting "START" to 741-741.
- For lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth ages 13-24, an additional crisis resource is provided by the Trevor Project:
 - Call the Trevor Lifeline at 866-488-7386, available 24/7.
 - Use TrevorText by texting "Trevor" to 1-202-304-1200 (Available Mon.-Fri. between 3:00-10:00 p.m. EST/12:00-7:00 p.m. PT).
- "A Friend Asks" is a free smart-phone app from the Jason Foundation that helps provide information, tools and resources to help youth.

Suggested Readings

PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Since My Brother Died by Marisol Munoz and Glenda Dietrich

The Empty Place by Roberta Temes

I Miss You: A First Look at Death by Pat Thomas

Help Me Say Goodbye: Activities for Helping Kids Cope When a Special Person Dies by Janis Silverman

The Brightest Star by Kathleen Hemery

Gentle Willow: A Story for Children About Dying by Joyce C. Mills

Sunflowers and Rainbows for Tia by Alesia Alexander Greene

Where Are You: A Child's Book About Loss by Laura Oliviera

Something Small: A Story About Remembering by Rebecca Honig and Tom Brannon

PROFESSIONALS

But I Didn't Say Goodbye: For parents and professionals helping child suicide survivors, Barbara Rubel

Death and the Classroom, Kathleen Cassini and Jacqueline Rogers

Helping Adolescents Cope with Loss, Ed. Kenneth Doka and Amy Tucci

Grief After Suicide, Ed. John Jordan and John McIntosh

Reframing PTSD as Traumatic Grief: How Caregivers Can Companion Traumatized Grievers Through Catch-Up Mourning, Alan Wolfelt

Techniques of Grief Therapy: Creative Practices for the Mental Health Practitioner, J. William Worden

TEENS

If Only by Carole Geithner

Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens by Alan D Wolfelt

Straight Talk About Death for Teenagers: How to Cope with Losing Someone You Love by Early A. Grollman

The Grieving Teen: A Guide for Teenagers and Their Friends
by Helen Fitzgerald

When Will I Stop Hurting by Edward Myers

You Are Not Alone: Teens Talk About Life After the Loss of a Parent
by Lynn B. Hughes

Grief Skills for Life: A Personal Journal for Adolescents About Loss
by Judy Davidson

When a Friend Dies: A Book for Teens About Grieving and Healing
by Marilyn E. Gootman

More reading resources are available on www.AChildInGrief.com

APPENDIX

Appendix A:

Sample Letter to Parents

Date

Dear Parent,

It is with deep regret that we inform you about a recent loss to our community. On [INSERT date], [INSERT name of the deceased¹] [INSERT brief facts about the death²]. This loss is sure to raise many emotions, concerns and questions for our entire Club, especially our members.

Our Club and [INSERT name of Club] has a [Crisis Intervention Team] made up of professionals trained to help with the needs of members, parents and Club personnel at difficult times such as this. At our Club [or INSERT name of Club site], we have [insert resources if applicable], available for any member who may need or want assistance surrounding this loss. We encourage parents to also feel free to use our resources.

We have enclosed information that may be useful to you in helping your child at home. If you would like additional information or need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact [INSERT name of appropriate party] at [INSERT phone number].

We are saddened by this loss to our community and will make every effort to help you and your child as you need.

Sincerely,

[Type the name of the signer and title. This letter is usually signed by the Chief Executive Officer, board member and/or any other party the Club deems warranted.]

¹John Smith, one of our ninth grade members; Mrs. Jones, who taught arts and crafts

²was killed in an automobile accident, died after a long illness, died suddenly, died by suicide (before inserting this information, be sure the immediate family is fine with this information being released)

Appendix B:

Sample Information for Members

This information should be given to Club staff to read to members at a designated time to share with the entire Club.

It is with sadness that I tell you about a loss to our Club family. On [INSERT date] [INSERT name of deceased] [INSERT fact about the death].

I understand that many of you may be upset and have questions about [INSERT name of deceased]'s death. I will try to answer any questions that I can. If you would like, we will take the remainder of this time period to talk about what has happened. At times like this, it is OK to have many different feelings, including sadness, anger and disbelief. It is OK to cry. Together, we can talk about whatever you may be feeling or want to talk about. If I cannot answer your questions, or you would like to talk to someone privately, there are support rooms now available [INSERT where support rooms are located].

Determine which members would like to leave for a support room. Ask the remaining members if they have any questions or comments they would like to share. Take time to answer and talk with members as they desire.

If there is not a lengthy discussion, consider quiet seat work rather than plans as usual.

Appendix C:

Sample Letter to Staff

Date:

To: All Staff

From: [INSERT NAME OF CLUB Crisis Team]

Re: [INSERT NAME OF DECEASED]

The recent death of [Insert Name¹] has or is expected to make a significant impact on our entire Club community. Our crisis team has been mobilized to respond to this tragic event.

On [insert date], [insert name of deceased] [insert brief facts about the death²]. We expect a variety of reactions to this loss from members, parents and staff. Some of these reactions may be mild, other reactions may be more intense.

To effectively assist all members of our community, an emergency staff meeting will be held at [insert time] on [insert date] in the [insert place such as the cafeteria or other large area]. At that time, our crisis team will provide further details and answer questions. We will also discuss how to present the information to our members. In the meantime, please refer all inquiries from outside sources to [insert name of the Media or Communication Coordinator].

With members, you can acknowledge that this death has occurred. However, please avoid discussion of any details; simply tell members that the Club staff will provide information to everyone shortly. Please refer any member who appears to be in crisis or having significant difficulty to [insert name of Counseling Services Coordinator]. As this tragedy has also affected our staff, we also encourage you to seek assistance from [insert name of Counseling Services Coordinator] if desired.

Emergency Staff Meeting

Time:

Date:

Location:

If you have any questions or concerns before the meeting, please contact [insert name of Crisis Team Coordinator].

¹John Smith, one of our ninth grade members; Mrs. Jones, who taught seventh arts and crafts

² was killed in an automobile accident, died after a long illness, died suddenly, died by suicide (before inserting this information, be sure the immediate family is fine with this information being released)



National Headquarters
1275 Peachtree St. NE
Atlanta, GA 30309-3506
(404) 487-5700
BGCA.org