Rationale

Loss is a natural part of a child’s life. A child may experience loss directly such as the death of a pet, the divorce of parents, or indirectly through cartoons or media’s multiple references to loss. Grief and grieving are normal responses to loss and typically include sadness, a period of anger, and deep pain, followed by acceptance of the loss. A child’s social and cultural environment often influences how long the grieving lasts, the ways it is expressed, and the level of intensity. While loss is a natural part of life and may temporarily impact a child’s functioning, prolonged grieving (i.e., complicated grief) is unhealthy and can lead to social isolation, significant weight fluctuation, depression, and suicidal thoughts and actions. If you are noticing these signs in your child, please seek medical advice immediately. When you support your child with this enormous challenge, you help her/him grow and thrive.

Promising Practices

Helping children early to normalize the loss and experience the grief will help decrease the negative impact to their functioning. Helpful tips for parents/caregivers include: a) explaining the situation of what happened and responding to concerns and confusion, b) communicating by encouraging expression of feelings and connecting by being patient and observant, and c) moving forward by keeping memories vibrant while remaining hopeful for the future. For a detailed description of these tips, visit Sesame Street at https://sesamестreetformilitaryfamilies.org/topic/grief/?ytid=a2VpflpbOmk. For Native Hawaiian children and families, Liliʻuokalani Trust provides support services such as counseling, grief groups, and referrals to community resources. Also, for families looking for Hawaiian culturally informed ways to deal with their grief, Liliʻuokalani Trust also provides these services. By educating and supporting children during their grief journey, parents/caregivers help to develop a healthy perspective of life which includes grief and loss, and to inspire a hopeful future.
Hawai'i Data

1. 31.2% of Native Hawaiian high school students reported they felt sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 or more weeks in a row.
   Source: Hawai'i Health Data Warehouse. (2015)

2. Since 2001, Kids Hurt Too Hawai'i has provided services to over 3,800 children grieving in Hawai'i.
   Source: Kids Hurt Too Hawai'i. (2018)

National Data

1. 60% of the population has experienced grief and loss, 7% experienced complicated loss
   Source: Dougy Center. (2017)

2. In 2017, the Dougy Center responded to 21,032 crisis, referral, intake and support phone calls and emails related to grief and loss.
   Source: Dougy Center. (2018)

Resources

Local
- Kids Hurt Too Hawai'i – Healing Young Hearts (808) 545-5683
- Hospice Hawai'i – Grief Support Groups (808) 924-9255
- Camp Erin Hawai'i – Where Children Learn to Grieve and Heal (Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i) (808) 324-7700
- Kōkua Mau – Grief and Bereavement support groups (808) 585-9977

National
- Dougy Center – The National Center for Grieving Children and Families (503) 775-5683
- Sesame Street – Sesame Workshop (212) 595-3456

References


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