

# GRIEF AND DEATH EDUCATION TOOLKIT

Talking About Death, Dying,  
and Grief in the Classroom



## WHY A GRIEF NETWORK?

We recognize that the support received by grieving children or youth can significantly influence their wellbeing. As a result, we aim to connect individuals and organizations who provide services and resources that benefit children, youth and their parents or caregivers who are grieving a death.

[www.childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com](http://www.childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com)



## OUR VISION

Every child and youth has honest information and well-informed support when someone they care about is dying or has died.

## OUR MISSION

To advocate for educational opportunities and support services that will benefit children and youth who are grieving the dying or the death of someone they care about.

## OUR VALUES

- Every child's rights should be respected
- There should be a broad range of grief support (formal and informal) available to all children and youth
- Grief support should be culturally sensitive
- Communities need to have capacity to support grieving children and youth: education and access to education, tools and services
- Every child is unique and their response to death is individual
- Grief support strives to give children and youth coping skills and increase their resilience to face life events
- Accurate language is especially important in talking to young people about grief and death



## OUR NETWORK

### Acclaim Health

[www.acclaimhealth.ca](http://www.acclaimhealth.ca)

### Andrea Warnick Consulting

[www.andreawarnick.com](http://www.andreawarnick.com)

### Bereaved Families of Ontario - Halton/Peel

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### Bethell Hospice

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & GRATITUDE

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Jodi Pereira

*Director of Community Programs, Heart House Hospice*



## FOREWORD

Death and grief are issues inherent to life, yet they are topics that are all too often pushed to the margins of our society. Unfortunately our school systems are no exception. While most children welcome opportunities to discuss dying, death and grief, adults tend to be far less comfortable with these topics. Most educators who have the opportunity to explore such issues with even the youngest of students marvel at their willingness to openly engage in such discussions and to share their thoughts, feelings, and curiosities.

Regardless of whether or not they have had personal experiences with grief, students of all ages benefit from having the opportunity to learn about dying, death and grief in a safe environment. For educators, this involves a combination of seizing the unexpected opportunities that present themselves, such as a dead bird in the school yard, and incorporating the topics into their lesson plans. This well thought-out toolkit will go a long way towards helping educators integrate these concepts into their classrooms by weaving ways to address the topics right into the current Ontario curriculum.

Children and youth who are grieving don't need supporters to tell them how to grieve or attempt to fix their grief. What they do need is to have people in their lives who can teach them that grief is a natural and healthy process. Educators are ideally positioned to do this, both proactively and when students are in the deepest trenches of their grief due to the dying or death of someone in their lives. When a family is grieving, the ability of adults in the family to be emotionally available to their children can be compromised. As a result the impact of a well-informed and supportive educator on a grieving student's life cannot be underestimated.

The resources and lesson plans in this toolkit have been carefully created to integrate conversations about dying, death, and grief into the classroom. Some aspects help facilitate understanding or foster emotional literacy, while others provide students with opportunities to reflect on their own experiences with grief. One of the most important things we can do to support the development of a healthy relationship to issues involving mortality and grief is to create an environment where students feel comfortable asking their questions and sharing thoughts and feelings. They also benefit from our honesty regarding the limitations of what we can know as human beings. Having the opportunity to wonder with caring adults about life's mysteries is an opportunity welcomed by most children.

I am deeply grateful to both the creators of this toolkit and for everyone who is utilizing it. There is currently a recognition that in order to create compassionate communities, we must build compassionate schools, and doing so involves incorporating death education into the curriculum. This toolkit helps educators to do just that. Your willingness to bring the topics of death and grief out of the shadows will equip students with tools that will serve them well, not just during their school years, but throughout their entire lives.

With Gratitude,

Andrea Warnick, RN, MA, *Registered Psychotherapist*

## INTRODUCTION

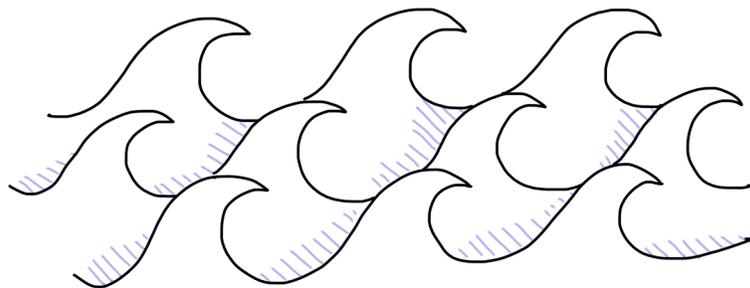
Grief is a universal experience that affects everyone throughout their lives. All students inevitably face a variety of life changes, which may include the death of a fellow student, a family member, a pet, a staff member, or an individual in the school community. Young people also grieve over other impactful non-death related losses and transitions. Many students will endure the breakup of families, loss of friendships, relocating communities, serious illness in the family, or having a family member incarcerated. Students not only react to deaths in their own lives, but also respond to the crises in the world around them, including local tragedies, natural disasters, and wars. Each of these instances can trigger a grief response. Regardless of the circumstances, researchers recognize that grief has academic, behavioral, and emotional implications within the classroom (Bowie, 2000).

Though talking about death can be challenging, emotional, and awkward at times, it is important to create school communities where the experience of grief is shared and supported in compassionate ways. Across the globe, schools have taken the initiative to start conversations about death, loss, and grief in classrooms. In Scotland, the **Resilience Project** was developed through a collaboration between Strathcarron Hospice, the Universities of Strathclyde and Edinburgh, and St Francis Xavier's Primary School. A series of lesson plans for students aged 9 to 12 were developed to foster children's resiliency by helping them to identify feelings and develop coping strategies for loss and transition.

This toolkit summarizes practical ways to start conversations about dying, death, and grief in the classroom. Based on aspects of **The Ontario Curriculum**, this resource was developed to facilitate lessons with a focus on death as part of our history and our present. Integrating death education into the existing curriculum can help promote a better understanding of death as an essential element of the life cycle, while equipping children to deal with grief, loss, and change.

Even if this is your first experience learning about children's grief and death education, we hope this toolkit will give you the confidence and ideas of how to speak about death, dying, and grief with students. As you read through this toolkit and attached resources, be conscious of your own feelings and emotions. You may have been affected by recent events, or have memories of personal experiences related to the material covered in this toolkit.

**For additional information, resources, or support, please visit [childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com](http://childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com) or email [info@childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com](mailto:info@childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com).**



# Table of Contents

A.	Glossary of Terms	P. 1
B.	Why Talk About It?	P. 2 - 3
C.	What is Death Education?	P. 4 - 5
D.	Benefits of Death Education?	P. 6 - 7
E.	Understanding Children's Grief	P. 8 - 9
F.	Aids for Speaking to Students About Death	P. 10 - 11
G.	Cultural Competency	P. 12 - 13
H.	Booklists	P. 14 - 17
I.	Lesson Plans	P. 18 - 57
J.	Looking After Yourself	P. 58
K.	Next Steps	P. 59 - 60
L.	References	P. 61 - 62
	Appendices A - G	P. 63 - 75

# A. Glossary of Terms

**Attachment** refers to an emotional bond or connection between people. People can also have attachments to meaningful items.

**Loss** is a commonly used word to describe the state of losing or having lost someone or something meaningful. It is important to note that using the word “loss” can be very confusing for young people. It is encouraged to model open communication by using honest language such as “death”, “dying”, and “died”. Throughout this text, “loss” may be used to refer to non-death related life changes (ex. breakup for families, loss of friendships, relocating communities).

**Bereavement** is the state of having experienced the death of someone.

**Grief** is the thoughts and emotions that a person experiences as a result of the death of someone or something that is meaningful to them. Grief is a natural reaction and is unique for every person and for every loss. There is no timeline for grief, and there is no predictable ‘order’. Grief affects many aspects of a person’s life: social, emotional, mental, physical, spiritual and financial.

**Mourning** is the expression of grief. Whereas grief describes the internal response to loss, the term mourning is used to describe the act of outwardly experiencing and expressing one’s grief – crying, praying, sharing feelings and memories, engaging in rituals, etc. Mourning supports the healing process by helping children to integrate their grief into their lives in a healthy way. Adult supporters can help facilitate mourning amongst grieving youth by providing them with a safe, judgement free space to talk about and express their feelings in their own unique way.

**Child/Children** is defined for the purposes of this document as a child, adolescent, or young person up to the age of 18.

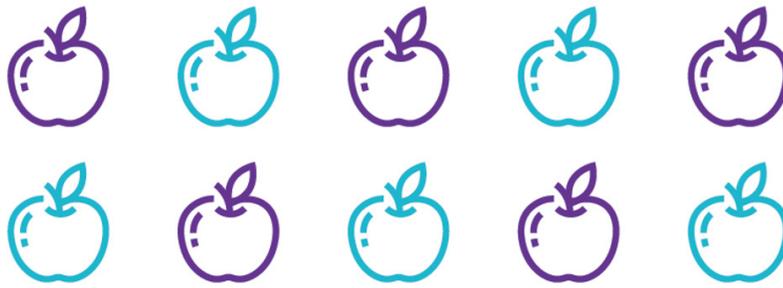
Adapted from **Group Facilitation Skills For Bereavement Support Volunteers** (2014)  
by **Bereaved Families of Ontario – Halton/Peel.**

## B. Why Talk About It?

*The Children & Youth Grief Network continues to strive for accuracy in its collection and dissemination of research, including statistics. Since this book was published in early 2018, there have been updates to the figures reported on this page. PDF copies of this manual have been updated to reflect these changes.*

Canada is home to almost 7.5 million children under the age of 18. In just one year, 203,000 will be bereaved by the death of someone in their family. Of these, 40,000 will experience the death of a parent or sibling who lives in their home.

Approximately 13 in every Ontario school (1 child in every other classroom) will experience a death this year.

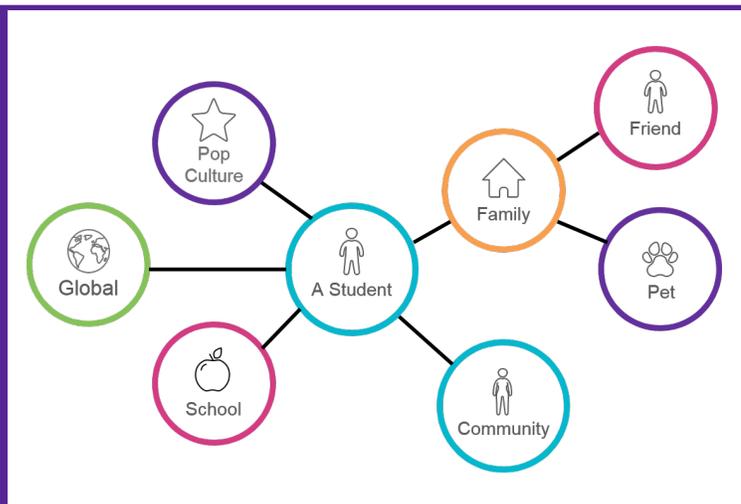


Data are derived from Statistics Canada using children under 18 and Census families. A census family refers to "a married couple (with or without children of either and/or both spouses), a common-law couple (with or without children of either and/or both partners) or a lone parent or any marital status with at least one child."

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Canada and 2016 Mortality Data

\*results must be "interpreted with caution."

In addition to the death of a family member, students are affected by death and grief in many ways. Beyond the traditional definition of family, children experience the death of friends, pets, and community members. Most young people are first exposed to death and grief through popular culture, and the portrayal of death through music, movies, and TV is often sensationalized and graphic. With these additional factors in mind, there is an incalculable number of students each year who are exposed to death, dying, and grief.



For families, grief complicates certain pre-existing stressors including mental health issues, financial insecurity, and family separation. Alternatively, these emerging circumstances can place a large burden on families who are also dealing with the illness or death of someone in their life.

While more work needs to be done to understand how grief impacts a vast range of experiences and identities, the following are a few examples of the long-term impacts of grief:

- ★ **Health and Wellbeing:** Parental bereavement increased the risk of social isolation (Ribbens McCarthy & Jessop, 2005) and bereavement remained a significant risk factor for self-injury among teens who lost a parent to cancer (Grenklo et al., 2013).
- ★ **Education and Employment:** Youth who experience the sudden death of a parent (i.e. accident, suicide) had lower educational expectations and career goals 5 years later compared to non-bereaved peers (Brent, Melhem, Masten, Porta, & Payne, 2012).
- ★ **Offending:** Incidents of parental death among persistent offenders was 17%, far higher than 3% to 4% seen in studies of the general adolescent population (Vaswani, 2008).



## C. What is Death Education?

According to **Pallium Canada (2017)**, “a Compassionate School is a place of learning that incorporates death education into its curriculum, school policies and approaches to provide a supportive community for students, teachers, staff and parents.”

### But what is **Death Education**?

#### Goal

Educate and support students so they are better able to cope with death, dying, and grief.

#### Framework

Death education provides a framework to recognize, assume responsibility, and maximize opportunities to enhance children’s understanding of death. Rather than avoiding topics of death and dying, this strategy recommends that members of a school community should learn how to prepare and assist children in coping with their first death experience (Mak, 2011). The delivery of death education should be considerate of factors including a child’s age, cognitive ability, emotional maturity, previous trauma, lived experiences, and family support (Allen Heath, 2011).

Death education complements aspects of the curriculum standards and can be integrated into a variety of subjects from kindergarten to grade 12. Within the safe and secure classroom environment, lessons covering topics of death and dying provide students with the opportunity to discuss their own experiences, learn from others, and develop the skill set and vocabulary to cope with death (Higgins, 1999).

The table below summarizes various approaches to death education:

<b>Higgins, 1999</b>	Death education can be effective if it includes: the student’s experience with death and loss, discussion of thoughts and feelings (grief), language associated with death, what happens at death (funerals, customs, symbols), and various beliefs in the afterlife.
<b>Katayama, 2002</b>	Death education in Japan begins with a discussion about the beginning of life. Educators focus on helping students develop healthy attitudes towards death issues by teaching children the importance of life and preventing students from participating in life-threatening situations.
<b>Oaks &amp; Bibeau, 1987</b>	Death education includes: informing students of lesser known facts; helping students cope with the idea of personal death and death of others; helping students become informed about medical/ funeral services; and helping students express thoughts and values related to death.

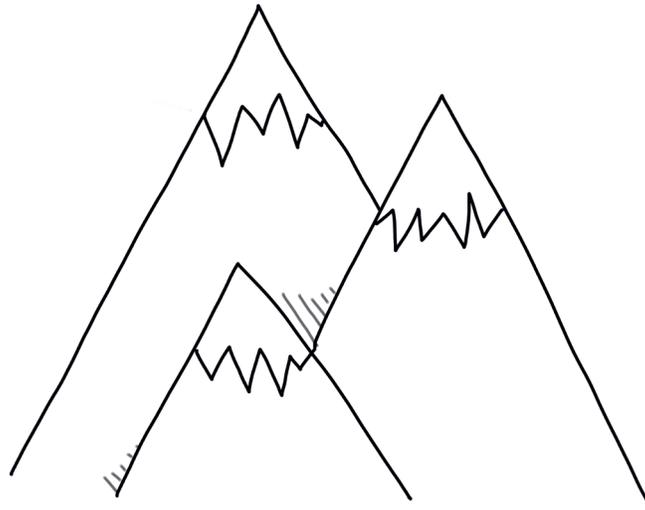
Death education focuses on the physical and emotional aspects of life and death. While lessons can incorporate biological aspects of death, it traditionally concentrates on teaching students how to recognize grief, access resources, and develop strategies for coping with grief. Death education can be tailored to suit your students and reflect the diversity of death and grief experiences in your classroom.

## Feeling Apprehensive?

At most schools, staff do not have access to formal training specific to grief and bereavement. So when considering strategies to implement death education in a classroom, it's natural to be apprehensive. In fact, many teachers have reported that they feel reluctant to initiate conversations about death and grief (Potts, 2013). While it may take time and practice for you to feel confident when talking about death and grief, the truth is that you and your students are more capable of handling discussions than you anticipate.

Most students are fascinated and engaged by the topic of death and grief, and typically know much more than you may expect. In a study by Gaab (2013), when analyzing students' responses to questions about death, results suggested that there was a discrepancy between the knowledge children held about terminal illnesses and the knowledge their caregivers believed they held. While many adults believe children are unaware, the children participating in the study had significantly more correct ideas regarding questions about death than adults expected. This highlights children's capacities to understand death-related concepts, and the importance of discussing these topics in enough depth to uncover and address fears and misconceptions that often exist alongside their accurate understandings.

As grief is a universal experience that affects everyone throughout their lives, children of all ages are naturally curious and have questions about life and death. Research conducted in Scotland identified that students aged nine to twelve had lots of questions about death and enjoyed having opportunities to learn more about it (Paul, 2015). The majority of teachers reported that the best time to introduce and normalize death education is during elementary school, and in a variety of areas of education. While you may feel it is too soon or too late to begin discussing death with students, 59 teachers from Ontario and Quebec agree that it is "good" to discuss death with students regardless of their age (Engarhos, 2013).



## D. Benefits of Death Education

### Pro-Active Approach

Traditionally, schools only address the topic of death in response to a significant crisis (reactive approach). Even if a school community has not been recently or directly affected by a death, death education takes a pro-active approach and incorporates topics of death and grief into everyday conversations. By providing death education prior to a death, students are likely to better recognize and cope with grief when a death occurs (McGuire, McCarthy, & Modrcin, 2013). With anticipatory support, feelings such as anger, fear, and regressive or aggressive behaviours can be lessened when a death occurs (McGuire, McCarthy, & Modrcin, 2013). The death of a loved one will still disrupt a student's life, but being better equipped with knowledge and language can help effectively increase a student's ability to cope and reach out for support when they need it. Death education normalizes these essential conversations and lessens the stigma or isolation that often accompanies grief.

### Improve Long-term Health Outcomes

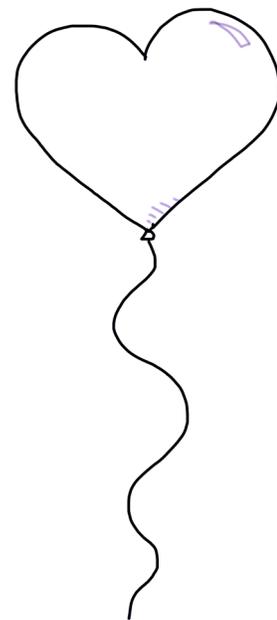
Adverse childhood experiences, including bereavement, are found to be strongly related to the development and prevalence of a wide range of emotional, physical, behavioral, and social problems throughout a person's lifespan (NHS Health Scotland, 2017). For example, research summarized by the Childhood Bereavement Network (2015) identified that parentally bereaved children are more likely to: have risky health behaviours (including drug and alcohol use), develop a mental health disorder and attempt suicide in young adulthood. While all of these issues are complex, death education provides a platform for students to develop healthy coping strategies.

### Create a Compassionate Community

Teaching the topics of death and grief promotes students' moral, cultural, and social development. Death education creates opportunities for children to learn about and develop a sense of compassion for themselves and for others. Open and honest discussions about death help to create a culture of compassion within your school and equip students with the skills to support others. Students and staff will feel comfortable, supported, safe, and better able to cope with death.

### Alleviate Fear and Anxiety

As human beings, death and dying are an inevitable part of life and living. By integrating these topics into the curriculum, we help present the subject as something normal and natural, rather than a topic of extreme anxiety (King-McKenzie, 2011). Death education can help alleviate students' fear and anxiety, and encourage them to develop a healthy and positive attitude towards life (Mak, 2011).



## Peer Support

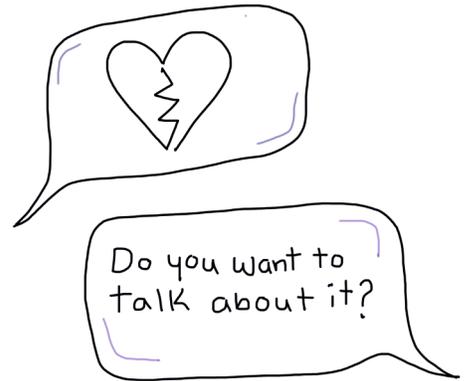
Following the death of a parent, children expressed their desire to be perceived as “normal” and maintain their social life as it was before the death (LaFreniere & Cain, 2015). Unfortunately, peers often don’t know how to react, what to do or say, and how to be supportive. Death education is an opportunity to strengthen a child’s natural support system by equipping peers with the skills to support each other through grief.

## Sharing Experiences

Death education introduces new concepts by activating a child’s prior knowledge and experiences. Following death education, children more frequently reference and feel more comfortable talking about personal experiences (Stylianou & Zembylas, 2016). Discussion invites students to reflect on their own lives and learn from others.

## Improved Communication

Following death education, students have reported that they were better able to speak with their parents and others about sensitive issues (Stevenson, 2004). Improvements in communication have been related to the development of an enriched emotional vocabulary and a greater willingness to share personal experiences (Stylianou, 2016).



# E. Understanding Children's Grief

## What are they feeling?

Every child will understand death and grief in their own unique way. A student's reaction to death education may be influenced by a number of factors including:

1. Age and stage of development
2. Cognitive ability and understanding of life and death
3. Emotional maturity
4. Previous experience of illness and death
5. Previous trauma
6. Support systems at school and at home
7. Religious beliefs and practices
8. Ethnic and cultural background

It is important to be aware of signs that your students may be struggling to cope with their own feelings and experiences. **Some of the common feelings and signs of grief include:**

<b>Anxiety</b>	Anxious when separated from caregiver or family members; Attempt to control the people and/or events in their life
<b>Fear</b>	Fear that they/other loved ones will become ill and die
<b>Anger</b>	Angry at person for dying or for being sick; General sense of anger at the world
<b>Shock</b>	May not show any immediate reaction; Quiet and disconnected; Play as if nothing happened
<b>Denial</b>	Tell themselves that it cannot be true; Block out the situation by continuing as normal
<b>Sadness</b>	Tearful or prone to sudden emotional outbursts
<b>Jealousy</b>	Jealous of others who still have a living mom/dad/sibling etc.
<b>Guilt</b>	Blame themselves for causing illness/death; Feel bad for things they say/did; Feel bad for being angry or jealous; Feel bad for having fun
<b>Embarrassed</b>	Embarrassed for being different than their peers; Embarrassed to talk about person who is ill or has died
<b>Confusion</b>	May ask questions repeatedly; Struggle to understand death

## Physical and behavioural reactions to grief may include:

### Physical Reactions

- Crying
- Distress
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Change in activity
- Headaches or stomach aches
- Stress

### Behavioral Reactions

- Withdrawal
- Regression
- Separation anxiety
- Distracted
- Inability to concentrate
- Engage in risk-taking behavior
- School absence

## Children's Understanding of Death & Grief

A child's understanding of death is closely related to their stage of development, cognitive ability, and emotional maturity. These factors will impact the language you use, questions you ask, and answers you provide.

### Pre-School Children:

1. Realize that someone is missing from their lives
2. Often don't understand the finality of death, may think that the person will come back, and continue to ask when they will return
3. Often react casually to bad news and may not cry or have an outwardly clear reaction
4. Cannot grasp abstract concepts such as heaven or soul
5. May show signs of sadness, but often only for short periods before escaping into play
6. May use play to act out their understanding of what happened
7. May seem to transfer their attachment to another person quickly for security
8. May regress in language and behavior (ex. baby talk, bedwetting, thumb sucking)
9. May ask the same questions over and over again
10. Will have a strong need for routine, structure, affection, and reassurance to feel safe
11. May express physical discomfort, like tummy or head aches

### Primary School Children:

1. If the right language is used, they may begin to understand that death is final – may lead to separation anxiety
2. Begin to fear death for themselves and others
3. May feel guilt or experience "magical thinking" (ex. my thoughts/actions caused the death, wonder how to bring the person back)
4. Still may not have language to adequately express complex feelings
5. Often ask specific questions to try and make sense of the situation
6. May want to go over facts again and again
7. May exhibit acting out, attention seeking or regressive behaviour as vehicle for feelings
8. May use play to act out feelings about death/funeral
9. May have difficulty concentrating or settling at school
10. Have strong need for routine and structure; and verbal/non-verbal expressions of affection and reassurance in order to feel safe
11. May express physical discomfort, like tummy or head aches

### Secondary School Children:

1. Understand that death is final, irreversible, and universal
2. Have appropriate language to identify feelings but may be unwilling/unable to discuss
3. May act recklessly in defiance of death (ex. drugs, alcohol, fast driving)
4. Dislike appearing different from peers so may deny feelings and reject offers of support
5. May question/reject beliefs, values, and religion as a result of experiencing loss
6. Become aware of the impact of their loss on future life events and understand grief as a life-long experience
7. May withdraw from academic or social activities due to changed circumstances
8. May become work focused in an attempt to block out pain or compensate for loss

For more information, refer to **Appendix A – Children's Understanding of Death**  
Or

For "**Tips for Recognizing a Grieving Child or Youth**" visit

<https://familyedcentre.org/parent-resource-library/>

*Tip sheets and podcasts are available in Arabic, English,  
French, Mandarin, Punjabi, Spanish, and Urdu!*



## F. Aids for Speaking to Students about Death

**“A child can live through ANYTHING, so long as they are told the truth and is allowed to share with loved ones the natural feelings people have when they are suffering”**

**– Eda LeShan, *Learning to Say Goodbye***

It's understandable that you want to avoid saying the “wrong” thing, but don't let the fear of saying the “wrong” thing stop you from reaching out. Talking about illness, dying, and death is difficult, but children benefit from having open and honest conversations. When children are left without answers to their questions they may feel isolated, or imagine something worse than reality. The following pages will help build your confidence in approaching this challenging topic.

### Questions and Answers

Questions can help guide your discussions and can indicate what your students already know, what they think, and the information they are looking for. Invite students to answer and ask questions they want to during lessons, and create an anonymous question box in the classroom.

When speaking to students about their personal grief experiences, try using open-ended questions rather than making statements in order to avoid making assumptions.

<p>“I know what you're going through.”</p>		<p>“Can you tell me more about what this has been like for you?”</p>
<p>“You must be incredibly angry.”</p>		<p>“Most people have strong feelings when something like this happens. What has this been like for you?”</p>
<p>“This is hard. But it's important to remember the good things in life, too.”</p>		<p>“What kinds of memories do you have about the person who died?”</p>
<p>“At least they're no longer in pain.”</p>		<p>“What sorts of things have you been thinking about since your loved one died?”</p>
<p>“You'll need to be strong now for your family.”</p>		<p>“How is your family doing?”</p>

While it is important to respond to questions with openness and non-judgment, always respond honestly. It is ok to say “I don't know” or “I'm not sure what to say”. To keep the conversation going, try asking the student what they think, refer to a resource, or connect the student to someone who can help them find the answer. It is ok to let them know that there are some questions in life that do not have answers.

## Language

It is best to use straightforward language when talking to children about illness, dying, and death. Children can be very literal, so some of the expressions that are commonly used to describe dying and death can cause a great deal of confusion for young children. Honest words such as dying, death, and died will help keep conversations clear and concise.

"Your brother is very sick"	Children may fear the person who is sick (i.e. contagion), or themselves/loved ones getting sick with a cold or flu.
"Daddy has gone to a better place"	A child might wonder why they cannot go to this place to visit their father, or think that if they are good maybe they can go too.
"Your sister has gone to heaven"	Abstract concepts, such as heaven, can be challenging to grasp. They might wonder why they cannot visit or fear they will be taken.
"Grandma has gone to sleep forever and she is never going to wake up"	A child might be scared to fall asleep, worrying that they might not wake up either, or they may constantly wake up their loved ones.
"We lost your mother today"	A child might wonder why people are not looking for her. The child may believe she can be found and look for their mother.

## Check in Often

Check in with your students often to see if they have any questions, misunderstandings, or worries. Provide a safe place, literally and figuratively, for the expression of feelings. Identify a space in your classroom, or school, where a student can go to take a break if they are feeling overwhelmed. Students who display unusual or out of character responses may require additional support.

**Adapted from *A Handbook for Volunteers: Supporting Children Grieving the Dying and Death of a Loved One* by the Children and Youth Grief Network**

Visit [childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com/videos/](https://childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com/videos/) to check our **video series featuring Andrea Warnick's** tips on **"What to Say, What Not to Say" (Module 4)**

Or

For more information on **"Communicating with your Child or Youth About Grief"** visit

<https://familyedcentre.org/parent-resource-library/>

Tip sheets and podcasts are available in Arabic, English, French, Mandarin, Punjabi, Spanish, and Urdu!



# G. Cultural Competency

## Cultural Competency

By Chantal Doucet, SSW

### What is it?

The National Association of School Psychologists defines cultural competency as “the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services; thereby producing better outcomes.” Essentially, cultural competency is utilizing skills, knowledge, and resources to ensure that youth feel comfortable, safe, understood, and listened to, despite any cultural differences between the supporter and the youth.

### How do we attain it?

Cultural competency is a life-long learning process that can never be fully completed as there are so many cultures and subcultures that it would be impossible to ever learn all there is to know – especially since they are constantly adapting and changing. Many texts will try and teach cultural competency through basics about religions or geographical region; however, the problem with this is that it naturally leads to assumptions. Although religion and where we grow up is often a guiding force in people's beliefs about death and dying, making an assumption about someone's belief systems based on either of those facts can become a huge problem!

### Here are two examples based on those assumptions:

1. **Religion:** Most religions, at some point, have espoused that there are negative ramifications that come with dying by suicide. However, to make the assumption that a young person ascribes to these beliefs could be extremely harmful and hurtful to someone who identifies as being a part of that religious community but does not believe in that facet of their religion. People's families, experiences, cultures, personal belief systems, the specific religious house they attend, and a plethora of other factors all shape a person's beliefs and cannot be assumed only by what a blanket amount of information about that religion states.
2. **Region:** Take Canada as a great example! Canada is wonderfully wide and diverse, with many belief systems! You could not write a text that said that most Canadians believed in one belief system as it would be entirely untrue. Each province, community, sub-community, institution, and even family may have a different belief system. The same can be said of all regions of the world – it would be dangerous and irresponsible to suggest that Indians, Croatians, Chinese, or any other country had a singular belief about anything.

These problems make cultural competency extremely challenging. Having knowledge about various cultural belief systems is a good way to be more informed and to see how others view the world; however, it is very important to make sure that we do not make any assumptions based on things we have learned previously – each person's grief is individual, as are their beliefs.



### The 3 A's

Here are some basic tips on how to become more culturally competent:

**Ask:** Investigate! Find out more. The best way to do this is to ASK. If there is something you don't know or don't understand – find out from the source and others.

**Adapt:** Be ADAPTABLE. Don't be afraid to change your approach or to try new methods of doing things.

**Affect:** Watch your facial expressions and body language. Even if you disagree or find something odd, make sure it doesn't show.

### Finally, start asking yourself some questions to better understand your own beliefs and biases:

- ★ What do I believe about death, dying and grief?
- ★ Where have my belief systems come from – family, religion, culture, experiences?
- ★ What cultural practices do I find odd or difficult to understand and why?
- ★ Try asking others about their beliefs, their experiences, what funerals are like in their families, what the dying process looks like, what they talk about around death, etc. – you might be surprised and learn something new.

Reprinted with permission from *A Handbook for Supporters: Extending Compassion & Care to Grieving Youth* by the Children and Youth Grief Network

## H. Booklists

Books can be used as a tool to start conversation, answer tough questions, and teach children the vocabulary to express their feelings and grief. Introducing death-related issues through literature makes it possible for educators to address the meaning of death and grief in a straightforward manner, and provide a comfortable atmosphere supporting flexible discussions among teachers and students (Katayama, 2002). There is a great variety of books about death, dying, grief, and bereavement that cover a multitude of cultural identities, types of losses, and grief experiences. Consider speaking with the school librarian to see what resources are available, or see if a community partner might be interested in supporting the purchase of additional books.

It is strongly encouraged that you read books in their entirety before introducing them to students to ensure they are appropriate and sensitive to your students' needs.

**The following booklists were made in collaboration with the Mississauga Library.** Suzanne Main is the Program Coordinator, Children, Families and Caregivers for the Mississauga Library System. With extensive experience as a Librarian, Children's Programmer and an advocate for early literacy, Suzanne is highly skilled in the areas of children's literature and early literacy development. Her responsibilities include staff training and the coordination and development of children's programs. The Mississauga Library System offers a wide variety of literacy based programs and services for all ages.

**For a full listing visit the Library website (or [www.mississaugalibrary.ca](http://www.mississaugalibrary.ca))**

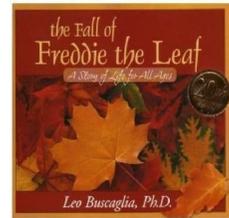
For more recommended resources, please see **Appendix B – Resources for Supporters** and **Appendix C – Resources for Children, Youth, and Teens**

## Understanding Death & Grieving (Ages 3-6)



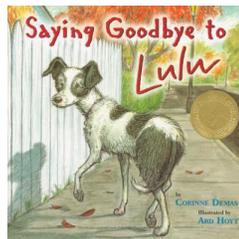
### [Rudi's Pond](#)

By: Eve Bunting



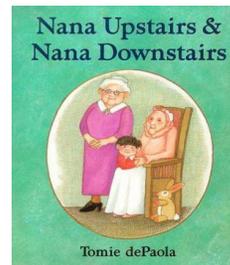
### [The Fall of Freddie the Leaf](#)

By: Leo F. Buscaglia



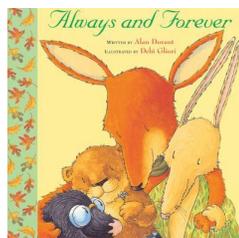
### [Saying Goodbye to Lulu](#)

By: Corinne Demas



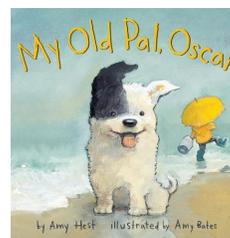
### [Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs](#)

By: Tomie DePaola



### [Always and Forever](#)

By: Alan Durant



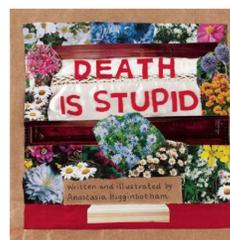
### [My Old Pal, Oscar](#)

By: Amy Hest



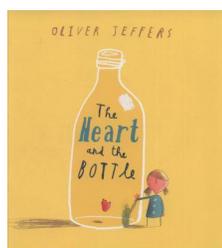
### [No Matter What](#)

By: Debi Glori



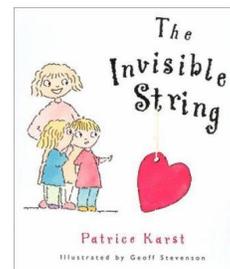
### [Death is Stupid](#)

By: Anastasia Higginbotham



### [The Heart and the Bottle](#)

By: Oliver Jeffers



### [The Invisible String](#)

By: Patrice Karst

**The Library**



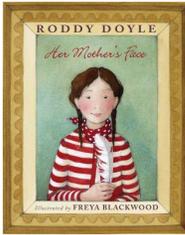
## Understanding Death & Grieving (Ages 7-12)



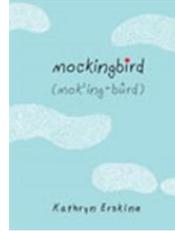
[The Thing About Jellyfish](#)  
By: Ali Benjamin



[A Greyhound of a Girl](#)  
By: Roddy Doyle



[Her Mother's Face](#)  
By: Roddy Doyle



[Mockingbird](#)  
By: Kathryn Erskine



[Stealing Our Way Home](#)  
By: Cecilia Galante



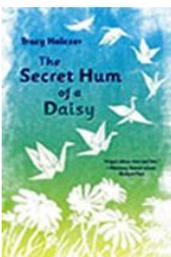
[The Honest Truth](#)  
By: Dan Gemeinhart



[Lost in the Sun](#)  
By: Lisa Graff



[When Friendship Followed Me Home](#)  
By: Paul Griffin



[The Secret Hum of a Daisy](#)  
By: Tracy Holczer



[Funeral](#)  
By: Matt James

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## Understanding Death & Grieving (Youth Fiction)



[Speak of Me As I Am](#)

By: Sonia Belasco



[Jane, Unlimited](#)

By: Kristin Cashore



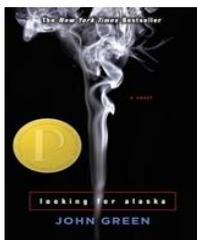
[Wherever You Go](#)

By: Heather Davis



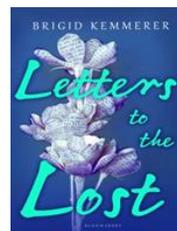
[The Great American Whatever](#)

By: Tim Federle



[Looking for Alaska](#)

By: John Green



[Letters to the Lost](#)

By: Brigid Kemmerer



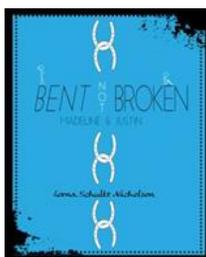
[We Are Okay](#)

By: Nina Lacour



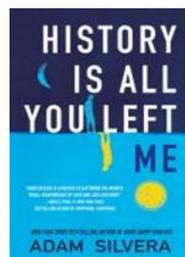
[A Tragic Kind of Wonderful](#)

By: Eric Lindstrom



[Bent Not Broken: Madeline and Justin](#)

By: Lorna Schultz Nicholson



[History Is All You Left Me](#)

By: Adam Silvera

**The Library**



# I. Lesson Plans

## Seize every opportunity to teach children about life and death.

The following lesson plans were designed to integrate loss and grief into the existing curriculum and expectations outlined by **The Ontario Curriculum**. The foundation of these lesson plans align with the aims, learning objectives, and key learning areas defined by the **Resilience Project**:

### Aims:

- To introduce death as a normal part of life
- To develop the skills and capacity of children to cope when someone dies
- To develop awareness of other people's needs concerning death and how to respond appropriately
- To develop an understanding of what happens to the body when it dies

### Learning Objectives:

- To consider the various changes that can occur through the life cycle
- To explore causes of death
- To develop awareness of cultural and religious responses to death
- To develop individual and community capacity to respond to death

### Key Learning Areas:

- Death as a normal part of life
- Cultural and religious beliefs relating to life and death

### To Prepare:

- Before the first lesson, send home the Appendix D – Letter for Families and Caregivers with students. This will help promote a more holistic learning environment and support system for students. It is important to inform caregivers and provide them with information regarding the lesson plans.
- If you have children in your class who have experienced, or are anticipating, the death of someone in their life, prepare them ahead of time and let them know what to expect from the lesson being presented. In this case, consult with their caregiver(s) and school counsellors to ensure it is an appropriate time for the lesson.

## How to Use the Lesson Plans

*\*The following outline describes what to expect from each component of a lesson plan\**

**Subject:** For example, Science, Social Studies, English, or Visual Arts.

**Grade:** Recommended grade(s) that the lesson is appropriate for. The activities and content are best suited for students in grades 4-10. However, you are encouraged to use your discretion as many lesson plans can be adapted for younger and older students.

**Ontario Curriculum Expectations:** Expectations pulled from The Ontario Curriculum, and correspond to the subject and recommended grade(s).

**Materials Needed:** Supplies required to facilitate the lesson plan. For classrooms that don't have easy access to internet or computers, please refer to booklists, Appendix B, and Appendix C for recommended text resources.

**Resources:** Resources are referenced throughout the lesson and intended to be shared with students in class. It is strongly recommended that you review the resources in their entirety before beginning the lesson to ensure they are appropriate for your students. However, you may choose to only use the resources to familiarize yourself with background information, and/or supplement them with other resources that you prefer.

**Students will...** Outlines lesson goals and expected outcomes for students.

**Key Words:** Defines important words that are used throughout the lesson.

**Introduction:** Summarizes the reasoning behind the lesson plan, provides you with tips on how to get conversations started and gauge your student's current understanding of the topic.

**Main Activity:** Step-by-step instructions for engaging students in a lesson about death, dying, or grief.

**Guiding Questions:** Provides examples of questions to prompt conversation throughout introduction, main activity, and reflection.

**Reflection:** Encourages you to check-in with students after the lesson by providing time to clarify misunderstandings and ask lingering questions. This section includes some tips on how to handle some difficult questions, ideas for follow-up activities, and reminders to look out for students who may require additional support.

# Lesson Plans

## Introduction

Before jumping into death education, it may be useful to gauge your classroom's current understanding and comfort level. The goal of this lesson is to familiarize your students with common language surrounding death, dying, and grief.

Lesson Title	Grade(s)	Page #
What is Grief?	All Grades	22

## Science

Death is woven into our understanding of energy, cell cycles, organ systems, and plant/animal life cycles. Plants and animals are often used as a topic to start death education, and assist discussion about the biological concept of the life cycle and the conditions of death (Katayama, 2002). Exploring plant and animal death and connect students to larger environmental issues such as endangered species and climate change (Russell, 2017).

Lesson Title	Grade(s)	Page #
Lifecycles & Lifespans	4	24
What is Cancer?	8 & 10	26
Dead Stuff	7 & 9	28
The Science of Death	10	30

## Social Studies and History

Death, dying, and grief are experiences that happen across all histories and cultures. Stories and legacies of death have been preserved for generations, and will continue to shape our identities. Examples from the past provide a way for students to start thinking about their personal history with death, grief, and mourning.

Lesson Title	Grade(s)	Page #
Death Customs	4	34
Disease in Early Canada	5 & 7	36
Memories and Memorials	6 & 10	38
Mourning History	10	41

## Health and Physical Education

Schools are committed to the well-being, safety, and success of all students. Death education fits naturally into the health curriculum as components focus on helping students develop healthy relationships, make good choices, and receive support inside and outside of the classroom.

Lesson Title	Grade(s)	Page #
Web of Support	7 & 8	43
What to Say	9 & 10	45

## Language and English

Literature is one way of exploring the topic of grief, sharing legacies, and learning about life and death. Through books, students can see firsthand how other people (fictional or nonfictional) deal with tragedies and crises. Reading, writing, and oral communication afford students the opportunity to reflect, react, and relate to dying. Students are able to develop their own opinions and tackle the difficult questions associated with death by discussing fictional characters (Masters, 2003).

Lesson Title	Grade(s)	Page #
Grief in Literature	4-6	48
Grief in Literature	7-10	51

## Visual Arts

The arts, including drama, dance, and visual arts, are all healthy ways to learn about and cope with emotions. Art provides a non-threatening way to explore meaning in death and dying, and allow the complexity of death to be explored (Tsiris, 2011). Through the creative process, students can take on difficult issues and convey ideas more clearly than they can with words.

Lesson Title	Grade(s)	Page #
Express Yourself	4-6	53
Grief in Art	7-10	56

# Lesson Plan: What is Grief?

**Subject:** All

**Grade:** All

**Ontario Curriculum Expectations:** N/A

**Materials Needed:** Chalkboard/whiteboard; paper & pencils

**Resources:**

- *The Grieving Process: Coping with Death* by watchwellcast (4:13)
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsYL4PC0hyk>
- *The Truth About the Five Stages of Grief* by SciShow (12:04)
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LudhllbeXs>
- *The Surprising Ways Death Shapes Our Lives* by BrainCraft (4:06)
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JoaIlg73L\\_gw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JoaIlg73L_gw)

**Students will...**

- Use words such as grief, grieving, and bereaved in discussion
- Describe what grief is and how it can affect people
- Discuss where they can find help when they need it
- Suggest some ways they could support someone who is grieving

**Key Words:**

- **Bereavement:** The state of having experienced the death of someone.
- **Coping:** The way someone deals with problems or difficulties.
- **Grief:** The thoughts and emotions that a person experiences after the loss of someone or something that is important to them.
- **Mourning:** The expression of grief. Whereas grief describes the internal response to loss, the term mourning is used to describe the act of outwardly experiencing and expressing one's grief (ex: crying, praying, sharing feelings and memories, engaging in rituals, etc.).

**Introduction:**

Being able to recognize and describe our feelings is an important part of life. This lesson simply allows students to demonstrate their current understanding of grief, increase their mental health literacy, and communicate their feelings in an open and honest way. Begin the lesson by asking students to help brainstorm all of the different feelings and emotions they can think of. Refer to the list of feelings and emotions on the following page for some ideas. It is important for students to understand that not all grief feelings are sad, mad, angry, or depressing, but there is room of happiness, joy, and relief if the person who died was suffering, if the relationship was strained, or if there is simply a happy occasion occurring after the death. Remind students that it is ok to be happy even if something very sad has happened in the family.

**Lesson Plan: What is Grief?** *Cont'd***Main Activity:**

1. Ask students what they think grief is, then share the definition of grief.
2. Based on the brainstorm at the beginning of the lesson, which feelings/emotions may a grieving person have? Some students may identify some or all of the feelings/emotions you brainstormed during the introduction.
3. Tell students that all of the feelings that they have identified can be a part of grief. Emphasize that grief includes many different feelings, and as long as no one is being hurt, there is no right or wrong way to grieve.

**Guiding Questions:**

- What is grief?
- Is it possible to have negative and positive feelings at the same time (i.e. sad and happy)?
- How do you know if you are, or someone else is, grieving?
- What would you say to or do for someone else who is grieving?
- How might a person cope with grief?
- How might you help a grieving friend?
- Who can you go to talk to about your grief feelings?
- What do you think might make someone feel \_\_\_\_\_ when they're grieving?

**Reflection:**

Recognize that it may be difficult for some students to talk about grief, so thank students for participating, for being honest and brave. Let students know that you may be bringing up the word grief in future lessons. Encourage students to use the support systems they discussed today. This would be a great time to introduce an anonymous question box for students to use following a death education lesson. Especially after this introductory lesson, as it may trigger thoughts and feelings for some students, be on the lookout for any students displaying a grief reaction or reaching out for help.

### List of Emotions & Feelings

Happy	Surprised	Relieved	Silly
Angry/Mad	Joyful	Amazed	Confident
Sad	Disgust	Hopeful	Overwhelmed
Confused	Anxious	Proud	Bored
Worried	Shameful	Confident	Shy
Scared	Jealous	Curious	Upset
Lonely	Hatred	Excited	Embarrassed
Loved	Disappointed	Thankful	Tired
Guilt	Numb	Relieved	Proud

# Lesson Plan: Lifecycles & Lifespans

**Subject:** Science

**Grade:** 4 (Habitats & Communities)

**Ontario Curriculum Expectations:**

**1.2** Identify reasons for the depletion or extinction of a plant or animal species, evaluate the impacts on the rest of the natural community

**3.3** Identify factors that affect the ability of plants and animals to survive in a specific habitat

**Materials Needed:** Dead & live plant; balloon & stethoscope; internet, computer & projector

**Resources:**

- *Why do animals have such different lifespans?* by TED-ed (4:56)  
– <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7m8QISPP7t0>
- *Where Are All the Dead Animals?* by SciShow (3:57)  
– <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VU1wWQaXmRI>
- *Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children* by Bryan Mellonie & Robert Ingpen

**Students will...**

- Learn about the meaning lifecycle and lifespan
- Understand that death is a natural part of the life cycle
- Discuss the various lifespans of plants and animals
- Learn factors that affect lifespan

**Key Words:**

- **Dead:** Means the organisms no longer works. Physical death is permanent, for example when a person dies, they can no longer breathe, move, or feel (they are not in pain).
- **Lifecycle:** The sequence of developmental stages that an organism passes through in its lifetime.
- **Lifespan:** The length of time for which a person, plant, or animal lives.
- **Life Expectancy:** The average period that a person may expect to live.

**Introduction:**

Display an object, for example a dead leaf, and ask students to think of some words that they could use to describe it. Now bring out a live plant. As a class, discuss the differences. Get students to feel the difference between being alive and dead. Ask them to breathe in and out into a balloon, and feel their own heart beating with a stethoscope. Throughout the discussion, explain that death is what happens when a living thing doesn't work anymore, and that no amount of food, water, or air can make it alive again. Start by explaining what happens to a physical body:

- When something is alive, it can move, breathe, and feel
- When a body dies, it stops working and can never work again
- The body doesn't think or feel anymore so it doesn't get cold or hungry and it can't feel pain
- No amount of food, water, or air can make it alive again

## Lesson Plan: Lifecycles &amp; Lifespans Cont'd

**Main Activity:**

1. Discuss lifespans of plants and animals. Play the video ***Why do animals have such different lifespans?*** by TED-ed (4:56). Some points to cover include:
  - Environment and body size make the aging process difference across species.
  - Since smaller species are more prone to predators and usually don't live as long as larger species.
  - Some small animals (such as bats, bird, voles, and turtles) have extra adaptations that increase their life expectancy.
2. In small groups, ask students to pick a plant or animal and research factors that affect life expectancy.
3. Introduce life expectancy for humans – discuss how the average life expectancy for humans changes in different parts of the world.
4. As a class, discuss what measures can be taken to improve life expectancy (ex. exercise and nutrition).

**Guiding Questions:**

- What does dead mean?
- How do you know something is alive or dead?
- Why do living things have different life spans?
- Which country has the longest life expectancy?
- What are some factors that would affect the lifespan of a plant, animal, or human?

**Reflection:**

It's important that students begin to understand that once something or someone is dead, it can't come back to life. Students are likely to have lots of stories and questions about resuscitation. A student may have a story about someone being "brought back to life". If these questions and comments come up, you may respond by saying "sometimes stories or movies show a person coming back to life after they have died, even though that can't happen in real life. Stories and movies can include things that couldn't really happen, but make the store more exciting or interesting". It is very important to have time to address these questions, and to explore the student's understanding of death. Student may be curious to know what happens to animals/plants when they are dead, and the video ***Where Are All the Dead Animals?*** may help to answer some questions. As a class, read the book ***Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children***. Through a series of beautiful words and illustrations, this book helps to explain the death of plants, animals, and people in a caring and sensitive way.

# Lesson Plan: What is Cancer?

**Subject:** Science

**Grade:** 8 & 10

**Ontario Curriculum Expectations:**

**Grade 8 - 3.1** Demonstrate an understanding of the postulates of cell theory

**Grade 10 - B2.5** investigate the rate of cell division in cancerous and non-cancerous cells, using pictures, videos, or images, and predict the impact of this rate of cell division on an organism

**Materials Needed:** Internet, computer & projector

**Resources:**

- *How do cancer cells behave differently from healthy ones?* by TED-ED (3:50)  
– <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmFEoCFDi-w>
- *How does cancer spread throughout the body?* by TED-ED (4:43)  
– <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OcigJn8UJNQ>
- *Why is it so hard to cure cancer?* by TED-ED (5:22)  
– <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h2rR77VsF5c>

**Students will...**

- Define cancer
- Give a general explanation of how cancer develops
- Explain how cancer is treated

**Key Words:**

- **Cancer:** A genetic disease that causes uncontrolled, unregulated growth of cells. Being a genetic disease means that the problem starts in the cells, that get instructions from genes about how to work, how fast to grow, and when to die. It does not mean that people who share some of the same genes will necessarily get cancer.
- **Chemotherapy:** Treatment with a drug to destroy cancer cells.
- **Metastasis:** The distant spread of cancer from its primary site to other places in the body.
- **Mutation:** Any change in the DNA sequence.

**Introduction:**

The goal of this lesson to help the class develop a general understanding of cancer and clarify any misunderstandings. If you are aware of any students who have had someone in their life die of cancer, or currently has cancer, consider checking in with them privately to give them a heads up about the information covered in this lessons. Make a plan to support any student(s) if they find any of the content triggering. Even though cancer research and awareness has increased dramatically over the past few decades, there are still many unanswered questions. Since most people are affected by cancer in some way, students may pull from their personal experience during discussion, or consider using a well-known figure (ex. Terry Fox) as an example. Reassure students that it can be tough to talk about cancer, especially when many of us have been personally affected by cancer.

Lesson Plan: What is Cancer? *Cont'd***Main Activity:**

1. Begin by asking student to define cancer. How many types of cancer can they name? Write them on the board. Explain to students that cancer is not a single disease, but is a group of over 100 diseases that affect parts of people's bodies in different ways.
2. Play **How do cancer cells behave differently from healthy ones? by TED-ED (3:50)**. Pause the video at 1:39. As a class, discuss the differences between a cancerous and healthy cell. Some basic differences include:

Cancerous Cell	Healthy Cell
Irregularly shaped	Uniformly shaped
Out of control growth	Controlled Growth
Higher number of dividing cells	Lower levels of dividing cells
Immortal	Mortal
Organized into tissues	Disorganized arrangement of cells

3. Resume the video until it is finished. Then discuss the mechanism of chemotherapy. Ask students to summarize why some cancer patients lose their hair. Chemotherapy affect frequently dividing cells such as hair, skin, gut, and blood cells.
4. Introduce metastasis by watching **How does cancer spread through the body? by TED-ED (4:43)**. Pause the video at 2:02 and as a class, review the 3 different types of metastasis.
  - **Transcoelomic:** Cancer cells penetrate surfaces of cavities in the body
  - **Hematogenous:** Cancer cells invade blood vessels
  - **Lymphatic:** Cancer invades lymph nodes
5. Resume the video until it is finished. Point out that there is much that we still don't know about cancer and metastasis, but that doctors and scientists have made huge advances over the years. While some cancers can be cured, others can be managed with medications, while others don't have a cure yet. Ask students to imagine that they are cancer researchers, what would they want to learn?

**Guiding Questions:**

- What is cancer?
- How does cancer spread? **NOTE:** Even though cancer can spread within a person's body, we know that cancer cannot spread beyond their body to another person. It is not contagious.
- How has cancer treatment changed as scientists have learned more?
- Why has it been so difficult to find a cure for cancer?

**Reflection:**

Affirm that students will probably still have many questions that have not been answered today, but maybe they will be able to find the answer in the future. For students that are interested in knowing more, consider playing **Why is it so hard to cure cancer?** by TED-ED (5:22). When speaking to young people about illnesses, it is important to be aware of the 4 common concerns that children have when someone they care about is seriously ill, dying, or has died: can I CATCH it, did I CAUSE it, can I CURE it, and who will take CARE of me. It's important to address these concerns even if your students haven't brought them up. Assure students that you can't catch cancer from someone who has the disease; and reassure them that they aren't responsible for a loved one's illness. Be prepared for questions about heredity and genetics. Offer reassurances that just because one family member has cancer does not mean that it will be hereditary, but knowing your family health history is very important as you grow older and see a doctor for regular check-ups. **For more information on the 4 C's, visit: <http://kidsgrief.ca>**

# Lesson Plan: Dead Stuff

**Subject:** Science

**Grade:** 7 & 9

**Ontario Curriculum Expectations:**

**Grade 7 – Interactions in the Environment**

**3.4** Describe the transfer of energy in a food chain and explain the effects of the elimination of a part of the chain

**3.5** Describe how matter is cycled within the environment and explain how it promotes sustainability

**Grade 9 – Sustainable Ecosystems and Human Activity**

**B3.4 (AP)/B3.3 (AC)** Identify the major limiting factors of ecosystems, and explain how these factors are related to the carrying capacity of an ecosystem

**Materials Needed:** Paper & pencils; Internet, computer & projector

**Resources:**

- *Dead stuff: The secret ingredient in our food chain* by TED-Ed (3:50)  
– [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KI7u\\_pcfAQE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KI7u_pcfAQE)
- *Whale Fall (After Life of a Whale)* by Sweet Fern Productions (4:29)  
– <https://vimeo.com/29987934>
- *Do Animals Mourn Their Dead?* by SciShow (2:43)  
– <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHJDmMSKIHM>

**Students will...**

- Learn about the brown food chain
- Explain the importance of death and decay in maintaining the flow of energy through our ecosystems
- Understand that death is a natural part of the life cycle

**Key Words:**

- **Decomposer:** An organism that breaks down the bodies or parts of dead plant or animal matter into smaller pieces (decay).
- **Decomposition:** The process of rotting and decay, which causes the complex organic materials in plants and animals to break down into simple inorganic elements that can be returned to the atmosphere and soil.
- **Detritivore:** An organism that consumes non-living organic matter.
- **Detritus:** Organic matter produced by decomposition of organisms.
- **Ecosystem:** A complex system that comprises living organisms and their environment, which interact as a unit.

Lesson Plan: Dead Stuff *Cont'd***Introduction:**

As seasons come and go, dead stuff accumulates in our ecosystems. An important feature of an ecosystem is the cycling of materials such as carbon, water, and other nutrients between living and non-living components. Begin by asking students to imagine a simple food chain with 3 organisms. Ask students to raise their hand if the lowest level of their food chain was a plant or herbivore. It is likely that many students imagined a green food chain beginning with herbivores happily munching on living green plants. However, this pleasant image leaves out a huge source of nourishment: dead stuff! Introduce student to the brown food chain: a food chain that begins with detritus and detritivores.

**Main Activity:**

1. Begin by watching ***Dead stuff: The secret ingredient in our food chain* by TED-Ed (3:50)**. Explain that detritus includes dead plant biomass, dead animal biomass, and feces and waste from animal metabolism. Ask student to write down another three link food chain that is based in detritus.
2. For a detailed example of decomposition, play ***Whale Fall (After Life of a Whale)* by Sweet Fern Productions (4:29)**. Instruct students extend their food web to include a scavenger and decomposer.
3. Ask students to research an ecosystem of their choice and show how 12-20 organisms are connected through a brown food web. Arrows linking each organism will show the flow of energy and matter. Student should label detritus, producers, consumers, and decomposers.

**Guiding Questions:**

- What happens to dead and undigested plant/animal matter?
- How is energy from dead matter cycled in the food chain?
- What is the role of decomposers and detritus in the food chain?
- What happens to the food web when detritus is removed?

**Reflection:**

Emphasize that dirt in our gardens and the earth that we walk on, which is the birth place of so much of life (ex. food, plants, trees), is all made up of that which used to be alive. Dead stuff is a mixture of all of the things that have died and broken down, but eventually this is where new life emerges. To connect lessons about detritus and decomposition to feelings and emotions of grief, watch ***Do Animals Mourn Their Dead?* by SciShow (2:43)**. Explain that mourning is the external expression of grief, which can be done privately or publicly. For humans, mourning may involve certain customs like attending funerals or wearing all black. As a class, discuss the similarities and differences between human and animal mourning mentioned in the video.

# Lesson Plan: The Science of Death

**Subject:** Science

**Grade:** 10 (Tissues, Organs, and Systems of Living Things)

**Ontario Curriculum Expectations:**

**B3.5** explain the interaction of different systems within an organisms and why such interactions are necessary for the organism's survival

**Materials Needed:** Internet, computer & projector; *The Science of Death: Timeline Handout* – Blank (for students to complete) and Answer Key

**Resources:**

- *At what moment are you dead?* by TED-ED (5:33)  
– <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5c6C3rHOdf8>
- *What Happens When You Die?* by AsapSCIENCE (3:11)  
– [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55j-nVwHa\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55j-nVwHa_c)
- *Why Can't We Transplant Brains?* by The Infographics Show (5:54)  
– <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ohCQRJGbV8>

**Students will...**

- Learn what happens when organs systems no longer work
- Address common misconceptions about the science of death
- Talk freely about death and dying

**Key Words:**

- **ATP:** The major source of energy for cellular reactions.
- **Dead:** Means the organisms no longer works. Physical death is permanent, for example when a person dies, they can no longer breathe, move, or feel (they are not in pain).

**Introduction:**

Make sure to check in with any students who may have experiences a death of someone close to them, or who may be experiencing a death in the near future. This content can be triggering, so even if you don't know of anyone who is experienced or is anticipating a death, gently let students know that this lesson may be difficult and make a plan to support students. Death is something that, sooner or later, we will all have to deal with. One of the key tasks of death education is helping students understand death and its finality. Even our cells have expiration dates. Our bodies are constantly in a balance of growth and death, as new cells constantly replace worn-out ones to keep our tissues healthy. But what happens when all of our cell stop working? Begin by reviewing the circulatory and respiratory systems: What are the major organs? What are their functions? How do they work together to keep us alive?

Lesson Plan: The Science of Death *Cont'd***Main Activity:**

1. Begin by playing ***At what moment are you dead?*** By TED-ED. Pause the video at 2:55. As a class, discuss the importance of ATP. ATP molecules are used by the cell as an immediate source of energy for important process such as repair, growth, and reproduction. Then ask students, what would happen if cells did not have ATP?
2. Resume the video, then pause at 3:44. Explain to students that without the ability to obtain energy through ATP, the body's organs ceases to work. As a class, review when happens when the heart and lungs stop working.
  - Heart stops – blood no longer circulates throughout the body.
  - Lungs stop – no oxygen delivered to cells in the body, and mitochondria can't make ATP and stop working.
3. Distribute the Science of Death handout and play the video ***What Happens When You Die?*** by AsapSCIENCE (3:11). Ask students to complete the timeline by writing down what happens to the body after it stops working.

**Guiding Questions:**

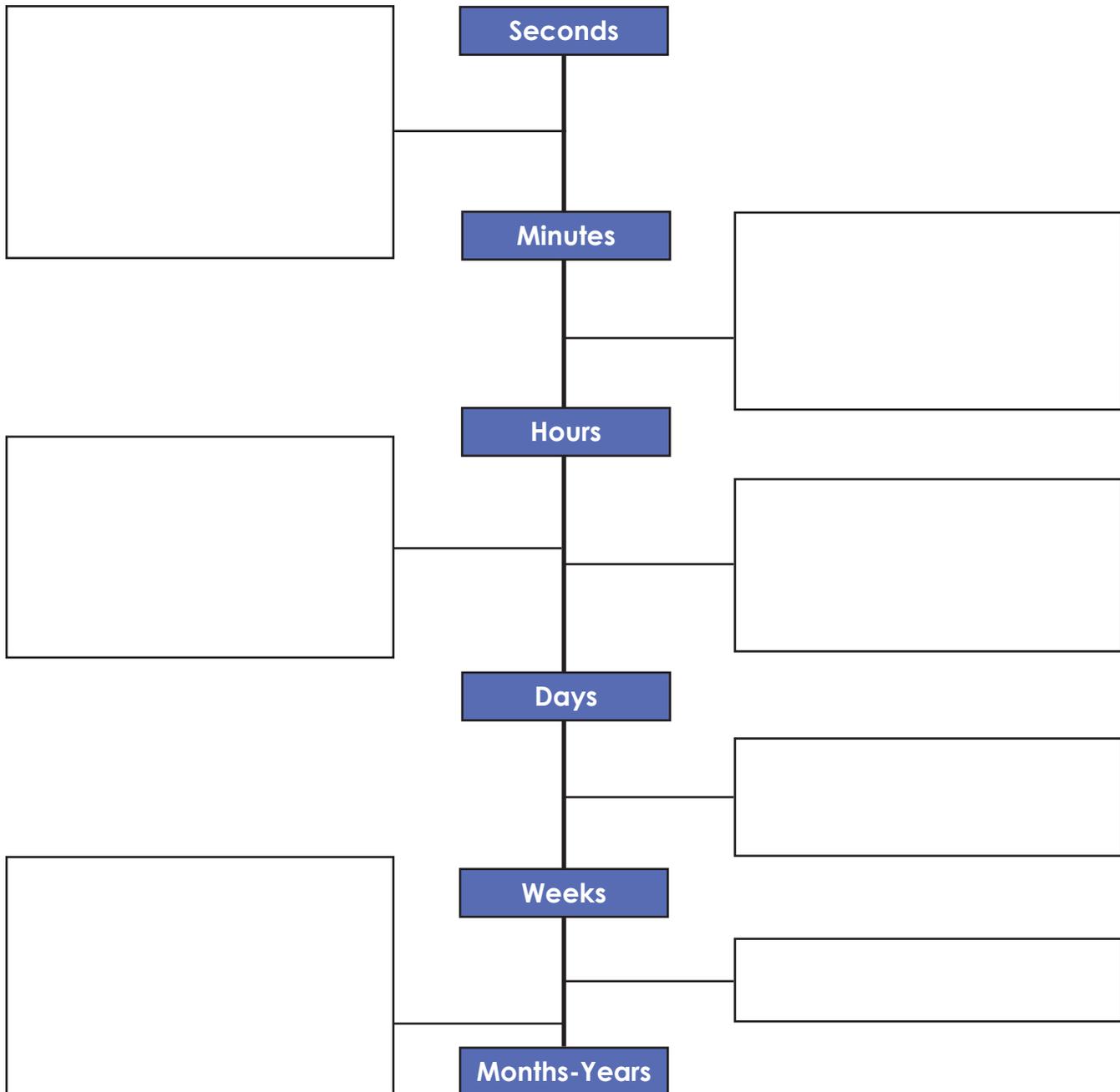
- How do the circulatory and respiratory system work together?
- What happens when the heart stops working?
- Why do our bodies need oxygen?
- What is the actual difference between a living and dead body?
- At what moment is a body dead?

**Reflection:**

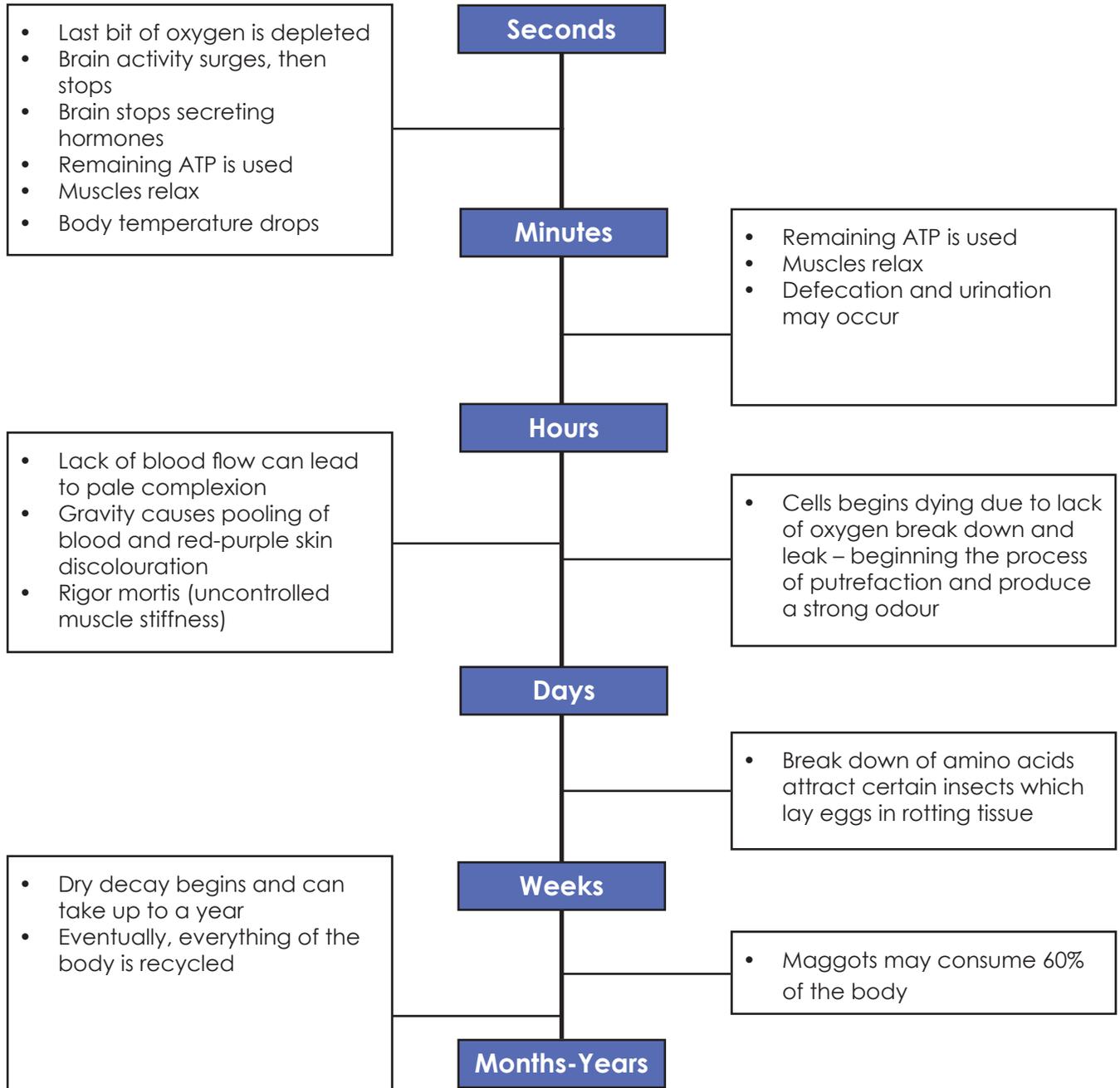
It's important that students begin to understand that once something or someone is dead, it can't come back to life. Students are likely to have lots of stories and questions about resuscitation. A student may have a story about someone being "brought back to life". If these questions and comments come up, you may respond by saying "sometimes stories or movies show a person coming back to life after they have died, even though that can't happen in real life. Stories and movies can include things that couldn't really happen, but make the store more exciting or interesting". It is very important to have time to address these questions, and to explore the student's understanding of death. For students who are curious about organ transplants, consider playing the video ***Why Can't We Transplant Brains?*** by The Infographics Show (5:54).

# The Science of Death Timeline

Without preservation techniques like embalming or mummification, bodies slowly decay over time. It all begins at the cellular level. Fill-in the timeline below to describe how the process plays out:



# The Science of Death Timeline: Answer Key



# Lesson Plan: Death Customs

**Subject:** Social Studies

**Grade:** 4 (Heritage and Identity: Early Societies, 3000 BCE-1500 CE)

**Ontario Curriculum Expectations:**

**A1.2** Compare aspects of the daily lives of different groups in an early society, and explain how differences were related to the social organization of that society

**A3.2** demonstrate the ability to extract information on daily life in early societies from visual evidence (e.g. art works such as paintings, sculptures, carvings, masks, mosaics, monuments, artifacts such as household utensils, religious articles, weapons)

**Materials Needed:** Textbooks/readings; internet, computer & projector; paper, pens & pencils

**Resources:**

- *Funeral Practices in Canada* by Historica Canada  
– [www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/funeral-practices/](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/funeral-practices/)
- [livingmyculture.ca](http://livingmyculture.ca) by Canadian Virtual Hospice

**Students will...**

- Research customs of early societies
- Discuss the purpose of funeral rites/customs
- Research some key facts about how a group of people mourn death
- Describe how various cultures have different beliefs about death
- Learn that people respond in a variety of ways to death and dying
- Use a variety of technological and information resources (ex. libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge

**Key Words:**

- **Culture:** The customary beliefs, values, social norms, and material traits of an ethnic, religious or social groups.
- **Heritage:** The legacy passed down from previous generations, including cultural traditions, art, literature, and buildings.
- **Identity:** How one sees oneself within various communities, local to global.

**Introduction:**

This lesson will explore death customs in early societies by highlighting the different cultural and religious practices that exist around the world. Begin by asking pupils to share any experiences they have had at funerals and customs surrounding burial and remembrance. As well, ask to share their knowledge of any other practices around the world. **Funeral Practices in Canada by Historica Canada** provides a great overview of the common procedures and customs in Canada.

Lesson Plan: Death Customs *Cont'd***Main Activity:**

1. Split the class into groups of 4 and assign each group a different early society. For examples, early societies can include: Haudenosaunee, ancient Greece, and medieval Asia or Greece. Each group will research the following aspects of early societies:
  - Beliefs about death and afterlife
  - Burial rituals/customs
  - Tombs/gravestones
  - Grieving/Mourning
2. Each group is to present back to the rest of the class a summary of what they have found, detailing how it is similar and how it is different to experiences shared at the start of the class.
3. Instruct groups to summarize their findings and make a list of similarities and differences between various early societies.
4. Ask students to investigate differences between death customs during early societies and present day. It may be helpful for students to visit [livingmyculture.ca](http://livingmyculture.ca) to hear people from various cultures share their stories and wisdom about living with serious illness, end of life, and grief support to others.

**Guiding Questions:**

- How did rituals differ for people of different classes or identities? (ex. people from different castes in medieval India, or men and women in Mohawk society)
- What are the key similarities and differences between these early societies?

**Reflection:**

Gather as a class to discuss key findings and ask children why they think people through history and the world mark death. Encourage children to discuss the customs and beliefs of their own family regarding death, pointing out the importance of respecting the beliefs and customs of others. It is important that students are aware that many different practices, beliefs, and customs that exist around the world. They should also begin to understand the reasons for these practices and ways they might aid a grieving family.

# Lesson Plan: Disease in Early Canada

**Subject:** Social Studies & History

**Grade:** 5 & 7

**Ontario Curriculum Expectations:**

**Grade 5 - A1.1** Describe some of the positive and negative consequences of interactions between First Nations and Europeans in New France

**Grade 7 - A1.2** Analyse some of the main challenges facing individual and/or groups in Canada between 1713 and 1800

**Grade 7 - B3.3** Identify key social and economic changes that occurred in and/or affected Canada during this period (1800-1850)

**Materials Needed:** Internet, computer & projector

**Resources:**

- *It's Our Time First Nations Tool Kit* by Assembly of First Nations  
– <http://www.afn.ca/education/toolkit/>
- *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada* by Canadian Geographic  
– <https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/>
- *Disease!* by CrashCourse (11:36)  
– <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PLBmUVYYeg>
- *Our History, Our Health* by the First Nations Health Authority  
– <http://www.fnha.ca/wellness/our-history-our-health>
- *How we conquer the deadly smallpox virus* by TED-ED (4:33)  
– <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqUFy-t4MIQ>

**Students will...**

- Discuss conditions and circumstances that affect death rate of a population
- Learn how the smallpox epidemic affected Indigenous communities in early Canada
- Discuss the impact of research and medical advancements on the treatment of epidemics
- Understand that intergenerational grief is important when talking about Indigenous history, culture, perspectives and experiences.

**Key Words:**

- **Colonization:** The action or process of settling among and establishing control over the Indigenous peoples of an area.
  - **Contact:** Interaction between First Nations and non-Aboriginal people. Inland contact was primarily through traders (ex. Hudson's Bay Company) and explorers (ex. Alexander McKenzie and Simon Fraser).
  - **Epidemic:** Occurs when an infectious disease spreads rapidly throughout a community at a particular time.
  - **Indigenous Peoples:** Peoples who are the original inhabitants of a given region, in contrast to groups that have settled, occupied, or colonized the area.
  - **Intergenerational Grief:** When the effects of grief cascade through a family tree, affecting multiple generations of people. Often occurs when grief is not initially acknowledged and supported with compassion.
- Genocide:** The deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, or cultural group.

Lesson Plan: Disease in Early Canada *Cont'd***Introduction:**

Prior to this lesson, it is encouraged that you review the It's Out Time First Nations Tool Kit by the Assembly of First Nations. Using Plain Talk 2: Pre-Contact and Plain Talk 3: Impacts of Contact as guiding resources, educate yourself and students on the First Nations prior to colonization, and the profound effects of colonization that are felt today. For additional information on experiences, perspectives, and histories of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, refer to the Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada by Canadian Geographic. While several epidemics have occurred over the course of Canadian history, contact initiated the genocide of Indigenous peoples and cultures in Canada. Prior to contact with Europeans, disease such as smallpox, measles, and yellow fever did not exist in Canada. As Europeans continued to colonize new territories and came into contact with different communities, Indigenous populations were drastically reduced by epidemic disease and violence. Some scholars estimate that, by around 1900, Indigenous populations had declined by upwards of 90%. This lesson will focus on the origin and impact of the smallpox epidemic in Indigenous communities. If you are aware of any students who have been personally impacted by the violent and traumatic histories you will be speaking about, consider checking in with them privately to give them a heads up about the information covered in this lesson. Make a plan to support any student(s) if they find any of the content triggering.

**Main Activity:**

1. Begin by discussing the conditions/circumstances that promote the spread of disease, or watch *Disease!* by Crash Course (0:00-4:55). These can include: increased population density, domesticated animals, environment (i.e. stagnant water), war, and trade. As a class, identify the conditions/circumstances that were relevant in early Canada.
2. Ask students to share their knowledge about smallpox. Explain that smallpox is an infectious disease caused by a virus that is spread by droplets from the nose and throats, or by particles on blankets and clothing (**Smallpox by Historica Canada** [thecanadianencyclopedia.ca](http://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca))
3. Introduce the concept of intergenerational grief by asking students to consider how the epidemic and impacts of colonization in early Canada affect Indigenous communities today. Share the definition of intergenerational grief, and explain that the effects of colonization (ex. widespread death, loss of culture & communities) can be grieved through many branches of a family tree.

**Guiding Questions:**

- What was the impact of European diseases in Indigenous communities?
- How did disease and death in early Canada affect communities today?
- How can we be compassionate towards folks who are grieving the death of their ancestors?
- What sort of care was available for people in early Canada?

**Reflection:**

Epidemics overwhelmed and infected many spiritual healers, and disrupted the balance of traditional healing systems in Indigenous communities. For more information on traditional healing, please visit [www.fnha.ca/wellness](http://www.fnha.ca/wellness). Even with the rise of modern medicine, spiritual healers continue to be a necessary part of Indigenous health and wellness. If students have questions about advancements in modern medicine, and are interested in learning about the history of the smallpox vaccines, consider watching **How we conquered the deadly smallpox virus by TED-Ed (4:33)**. As a class, reflect on how research and advancements in medicine have changed the impact of deadly diseases.

# Lesson Plan: Memories and Memorials

**Subject:** Social Studies & History

**Grade:** 6 (Communities in Canada, Past and Present) & 10 (Canada, 1914-1929)

**Ontario Curriculum Expectations:**

**Grade 6**

**A1.1** Explain how various features that characterize a community can contribute to the identity and image of a country (ex. built features such as memorials)

**A3.4** Describe significant events or developments in the history of two or more communities and how these events affected their communities' development and/or identity

**Grade 10**

**B2.1** Identify some of the causes of World War I and explain some of the consequences of Canada's military participating in the war

**B3.3** Explain the significance for the development of Canadian identity, citizenship and/or heritage of some key international events and/or developments in which Canada participated in this period

**Materials Needed:** Planning a Memorial Handout

**Resources:**

- *National Inventory of Canadian Military Memorials* by Veterans Affairs Canada  
– [www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance](http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance)
- *Portraits of Grief* by The New York Times  
– [archive.nytimes.com](http://archive.nytimes.com)

**Students will...**

- Talk about their experiences at memorial services and funerals
- Apply their knowledge of Canadian history
- Discuss the importance of memorials to Canadian identity
- Plan a memorial in honour of a historical event or person

**Key Words:**

- **Mourning:** The expression of grief. Whereas grief describes the internal response to loss, the term mourning is used to describe the act of outwardly experiencing and expressing one's grief (ex: crying, praying, sharing feelings and memories, engaging in rituals, etc.).
- **Memorial:** Something (ex. monument, cenotaph) established to remind people of an event or person.

**Introduction:**

Memorials are an important way to preserve and acknowledge histories. Ask students if they have ever seen or attended a memorial commemorating a historical event/person: Why did they see/attend the memorial? How did they feel during and after? What details stood out to them? Why is it important to remember? Explain that memorials can be structures (ex. monuments or cenotaphs), or events (ex. remembrance days).

Lesson Plan: Memories and Memorials *Cont'd***Main Activity:**

1. Present some examples of national and international memorials relevant to Canadian history and identity. When you review various commemorations, ask student what criteria do they think have determined whether an event/person is commemorated by Canadians? Examples include:
  - Canadian National Vimy Memorial (France)
  - Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (Ottawa)
  - National Aboriginal Veterans Monument (Ottawa)
  - Women Are Persons! (Ottawa)
2. Distribute the Planning a Memorial handout. Tell students that they will be designing/planning a memorial for an historical event or figure who has died. Recommend that students select an event/person of personal importance, and consider how they would engage the community and educate others about the event/person.
3. Encourage students to think outside the box. For example, memorials can be produced electronically by building a website or online archive. Show student **Portraits of Grief by New York Times** that commemorates victims and survivors of the 9/11 attacks. Other ideas for memorials or remembrance activities include:
  - Design a plaque, fountain, or statue
  - Plant a tree or garden, or plan a park
  - Create a website or social media campaign
4. In small groups, or as a class, have students present their memorial. If possible, provide opportunities and resources for student bring their memorials to life.

**Guiding Questions:**

- Why are memorials so important?
- In what ways do memorials contribute to an understanding of Canadian identity?
- What reminds you of a loved one that has died?

**Reflection:**

After a death, people often feel the urge to mark the significance of the death. As a class, reflect on personal experiences attending memorials for loved ones or community members who have died. You can ask questions like: Was there a memorial? What do you remember about it? What did you like/dislike? It is important to recognize that many adults shield young people from attending funerals and memorials because they feel that it will be too sad, or isn't the place for them. Save discussion space for students to share that they were excluding from attending services or memorial ceremonies, and how that experience felt for them. What would you have wanted to happen? Discuss ways students can remember someone they miss (e.g. through pictures, videos, items, places, talking about them), and how they can create opportunities to honour their memories (i.e. cooking their loved one's favourite meals or spending time in their favourite place). It is important to address that sometimes we memorialize public figures, and then after time, some of their actions that's seemed heroic at the time are judged to be unethical and their public memorials may be removed. Part of the reflection could address that often when people die they are put on a pedestal, and we talk about all of their good qualities. However, being human means that there are also aspects of many people that we may not miss, or were even harmful. This conversations could make space for students to feel okay when someone dies in their life and they don't miss the person, or aspects of the person.

# Planning a Memorial

Use the space below to plan a memorial for a historic event or figure. When planning the details, consider the following examples:

- **Monument:** What material would you use? Where would it be located? What would it look like?
- **Day of Remembrance:** What music would you play? Would you include any readings? Who would you invite?
- **Electronic Memorial:** What platform (i.e. webpage, blog, social media) would you choose? How would you engage the online community?

**Name of Event/Person:** \_\_\_\_\_

Why is this event/person important to Canadian history and identity?

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Does a memorial already exist in honour of this event/person? If so, what do you like/dislike about it? If not, why is it important to create this memorial?

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**Memorial Description:**

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Details:

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# Lesson Plan: Mourning History

**Subject:** History

**Grade:** 10

**Ontario Curriculum Expectations:**

**C3.2** Describe responses of Canada and Canadians to some major international events and/or developments that occurred between 1929 and 1945, including their military response to WW2 and explain the significant of these responses for Canadian identity and/or heritage

**E3.4** Describe some of the ways in which Canada and Canadians have, since 1982, acknowledged the consequences of and/or commemorated past events, with a focus on human tragedies and human rights violations that occurred in Canada or elsewhere in the world and explain the significant of the commemorations for identity and/or heritage in Canada

**Materials Needed:** Identification Cards; Internet, computer & projector

**Resources:**

- *Identification Cards* by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
  - <https://www.ushmm.org/remember/id-cards>
- *Why We Remember the Holocaust* by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (8:54)
  - <https://www.ushmm.org/remember/days-of-remembrance/why-we-remember>

**Students will...**

- Examine the interactions of ethnic, national, or cultural influences in specific situations or event
- Compare and evaluate the impact of stereotyping, conformity, acts of altruism and other behaviors on individuals and groups
- Apply concepts such as role, status, and social class in describing the connections and interactions of individuals, groups and institutions in society

**Key Words:**

- **Mourning:** The external expression of grief. Whereas grief describes the internal response to loss, the term mourning is used to describe the act of outwardly experiencing and expressing one's grief (ex: crying, praying, sharing feelings and memories, engaging in rituals, etc.).

**Introduction:**

Situations in local and world history provide opportunities for discussion of loss and grief. There is no shortage of historical examples of tragedy and loss, and it can be challenging to confront injustice, confront hatred, and genocide. This lesson will focus on the impact and legacy of the Holocaust. This lesson may contain some powerful material and evoke strong emotions among students. Try to select material that does not sensationalize the death(s), select material appropriate for students, and includes necessary trigger warnings. If you are aware of any students who have been personally impacted by the violent and traumatic histories you will be speaking about, consider checking in with them privately to give them a heads up about the information covered in this lesson. Make a plan to support any student(s) if they find any of the content triggering. Some students may prefer to discuss their thoughts privately or in a small group setting.

Lesson Plan: Mourning History *Cont'd***Main Activity:**

1. Find out what students know about the Holocaust and how they know it. For example, ask if they have heard of Auschwitz and what it is. You will get a feeling for the depth of their knowledge. This is also a good opportunity to have students articulate the questions they have about the Holocaust and to store these questions as a framework for discussion later.
2. Distribute an **Identification Card** to each student. Ask students to read their identification card and provide some time for reflection. Ask students to share what feelings/emotions they had while reading the cards. Did they have any feelings of grief? How did the death of this person impact their family and community?
3. **Play Why We Remember by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (8:54)**. As a class, discuss the importance of remembering those who have died, and supporting survivors.

**Guiding Questions:**

- What role did Canada play during these human tragedies?
- What impact do you think these stories have on the people in Canada?
- What can we learn from survivors of genocide?
- How can we support grieving the loss of someone through genocide?
- Why is it important to remember, and talk about, human tragedies?

**Reflection:**

This activity transitions into the *Memories and Memorials* lesson. Students can plan or design a memorial in honour of an event or person they have learned about. For example, Nanking Massacre, the Holocaust, Manhattan Project, or Residential Schools. Student may also summarize their knowledge by participating or planning an activity for memorial days/months such as Remembrance Day, Black History or Aboriginal History Month.

# Lesson Plan: Web of Support

**Subject:** Health and Physical Education

**Grade:** 7 & 8

**Ontario Curriculum Expectations:**

**Grade 7**

**C1.2** Demonstrate understanding of linkages between mental health problems and problematic substance use, and identify school and community resources (e.g., trusted adults at school, guidance counsellors, public health services, community elders, help lines) that can provide support for mental health concerns relating to substance use, addiction, and related behaviours

**Grade 8**

**C2.3** Explain how stress affects mental health and emotional well-being, and demonstrate an understanding of how to use a variety of strategies for relieving stress and caring for their mental health

**Materials Needed:** Yarn

**Resources:**

- *Tips for Students (Appendix F)*

**Students will...**

- Identify support systems and how support is provided
- Learn how they support a grieving friend or family member
- Discuss when and where to get help

**Key Words:**

- **Resilience:** The ability to recover or “bounce back” from disruptive change, illness, or misfortune. Resilient people possess the skills to cope with life’s challenges, respond to stress, and move forward. Resilience does not involve the absence of grief – but rather processing and integrating difficult situations in a healthy way.
- **Mental Health:** All aspects of a person’s well-being that affect their emotions, learning, and behavior. It is important to note that mental health is not merely the absence of mental illness.

**Introduction:**

Coping with grief involves taking care of the different aspects of life: the physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual. It involves the ability to think, feel, act, interact, and experience the feelings of grief and integrate them in a healthy way. Sometimes we need to make space for sorrow and other tough feelings. Remind students that there is no wrong way to grieve or express their feelings, as long as they are not hurting themselves or anyone else. Different things work for different people, and you have to find the way that works best for you. For example, some people find that taking some quiet time to reflect, rest, write, read, meditate, or listen to music works best for them. While others find that being physically active or talking with others is helpful in processing grief.

**Main Activity:**

1. In order to help students who don't know how to help, or don't think they have anything to offer, validate that because we all need different things when we are grieving, each of our unique way of offering support is also valued. Ask students to think about what has been helpful when they were grieving?
2. Students stand in a circle, the teacher holds the end of the string and gives an example of how they would support a person who is grieving (i.e. write them a card, make them a meal, attend the funeral). Let students know that it's ok to not have a unique idea from everyone in the class, and it is ok to repeat examples.
3. The teacher then throws the ball of yarn to another student in the circle, who then gives an example of how they would help a person who is grieving. Continue until every student has a hold of the string.
4. Activity can be repeated by asking students to provide examples of ways to express your feelings, and people/places you can go for help
5. Point out that all of these suggestions represent ways to feel connected and supported. Distribute Tips for Students and ask students to add on any other ideas of how they could process their grief in a healthy way or support someone else who is grieving.

**Guiding Questions:**

- How can you support someone who is grieving?
- What has been helpful when you were grieving?
- What can you do to take care of your mental health?
- Who can you reach out to?
- Where can you go when you need a break?

**Reflection:**

As a class, discuss the signs to know when professional help may be need. Examples include:

- Contemplating suicide or self-harm
- Relying on drugs or alcohol to numb feelings
- Not having anyone safe to talk to
- Lost interest in activities that were once important to you
- Experiencing physical pain or chronic fatigue
- Experiencing significant anxiety or panic attacks
- Feeling isolated from friends and family
- Feeling no purpose in being with anyone or doing anything
- Dealing with other major stresses (i.e. divorce, moving, loss of job)

It's important to leave students with the idea that they are not alone when someone in their life dies. Remind students that seeking help does not mean you are mentally ill or weak. If students notice ongoing emotions or behaviours that are interfering with their daily life, encourage them to seek help from a mental health professional. Additional help can come from people including: psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, doctors, guidance and grief counsellors. Tell students that if they are struggling with a program big or small, they can call **Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868**.

# Lesson Plan: What to Say

**Subject:** Health and Physical Education

**Grade:** 9 & 10

**Ontario Curriculum Expectations:**

**Grade 9**

**C3.2** Identify warning signs and symptoms that could be related to mental health concerns and describe a variety of strategies for coping with or responding to mental health concerns that affects oneself or others

**Grade 10**

**C1.1** Demonstrate an understanding of factors that enhance mental health and emotional and spiritual well-being

**Materials Needed:** *What To Say Handout*

**Resources:**

- *Tips for Students (Appendix F)*
- *How do you help a grieving friend?* by Refuge in Grief (3:59)  
– <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2zLCCRT-nE#action=share>

**Students will...**

- Discuss what to say to other people during emotional times
- Learn how they can support a grieving friend or family member

**Key Words:**

- **Resilience:** The ability to recover or “bounce back” from disruptive change, illness, or misfortune. Resilient people possess the skills to cope with life’s challenges, respond to stress, and move forward. Resilience does not involve the absence of grief – but rather processing and integrating difficult situations in a healthy way.
- **Active Listening:** A communication skill in which the listener focuses closely on the speaker’s verbal and nonverbal messages and summarizes these messages to help the speaker feel heard and understood.

**Introduction:**

Communicating with other people during emotional times may feel awkward or uncomfortable. It can be difficult to know what to say, and sometimes the fear of saying the ‘wrong thing’ will stop us from saying anything at all. Communication can be happy in many ways, it can be verbal and non-verbal. Ask students to think of time when they have been a part of a difficult conversation. Maybe they initiated the difficult conversation with someone else, or has someone else ask them a difficult question. Did they remember statements that were especially helpful? Would they choose to say something (or not say something)? What did they say? How did the person respond, and how did they feel after saying (or not saying) something? How can they communicate this in a non-verbal way?

Lesson Plan: What to Say *Cont'd***Main Activity:**

1. Separate students into pairs and distribute copies of the *What to Say* handout.
2. Within each pair, students will take turns reading the phrase to each other. For the student who is listening, ask them to practice their active listen skills. What non-verbal cues can they use to communicate that they are hearing what the person is saying?
3. As they are reading them, they can circle whether they disliked, liked, or were unsure about some of the phrases. Remind students that there is no right or wrong answers.
4. Ask students to discuss their reactions with their partner and write down some notes.
5. As a class, go through the list and ask students to raise their hand if they disliked, liked, or were unsure about the phrase.
6. Ask students if there is any phrases missing from the list.

**Guiding Questions:**

- Has there ever been a time when you didn't know what to say?
- What would you say to someone who is grieving?
- Has someone ever said anything about grief that made you feel bad?
- What was the most helpful thing someone said to you when you were grieving?
- What would you want someone to say to you when you were grieving?

**Reflection:**

Discuss what students learned about themselves and their classmate. Ask students to think of a time when this activity would have been helpful, or would be helpful in the future. Was there anything surprising or difficult about doing this activity? Emphasize that peer supporting is crucial for grieving teens. Most people struggle to know what to say when they are supporting someone having a difficult time, including adults. The instinct of most people is to “fix” a person’s pain. Remind students that even if they don’t know what to say, there may be something they can do for someone who is grieving (ex. write a card, bring them food, include them). Sometimes showing up, listening, and just being a good friend is the best they can do and is really helpful, even though it doesn’t involved “fixing” the situation. As a class, brainstorm some things they could do to show support, and distribute a copy of **Tips for Students (Appendix E)**. Sometimes it can best to not say anything at all and just listen. Have students share ideas of what active listening looks and sounds like.

## What to Say

When someone is grieving, it can be difficult to know what to say. With a partner, take turns saying these phrases. Following each phrase, circle your initial reaction and make notes on why you may like, or not like, the phrase. There are no right or wrong answers.

	I don't like it	Not sure	I like it	Notes
I'm sorry for your loss				
You need to be strong for your family				
I know how you feel				
I am thinking of you				
Everything happens for a reason				
They are in a better place				
I am just a text or phone call away				
I wish I had the right words to say				
Aren't you over it yet?				
That's life! Everyone dies				
Everything will be fine				
Remember, others have it worse than you				
Take it one day at a time				
Is there anything I can do?				
Just remember the good times				
It gets better				

# Lesson Plan: Grief in Literature

**Subject:** Language (Reading)

**Grade:** 4 - 6

**Ontario Curriculum Expectations:**

**Demonstrate Understanding**

**1.4** demonstrate understanding of a variety of texts by summarizing important ideas and citing supporting details

**Extending Understanding**

**1.6** extend understanding of texts by connecting the ideas in them to their own knowledge, experience, and insights, to other familiar texts, and to the world around them

**Analysing Texts**

**1.7** analyse texts and explain how specific elements in them contribute to meaning

**Materials Needed:** Books/poems/short stories; feelings web

**Resources:**

- *Booklists*

**Students will...**

- Discuss characters from novels who have experiences grief/bereavement
- Identify a character's feelings and emotions
- Explain how a character's struggle resonated with a personal experience
- Discuss the ways that characters processed their grief

**Introduction:**

Books are a great way to provide education and promote conversation about death, dying, and grief. Begin by reviewing the definition of grief and the different feelings/emotions of grief. Discuss attachment and have students make a list of people that they are close to (family members, relatives, neighbours, classmates). Point out that we tend to be sad, disappointed, or even heartbroken when something happens to disrupt these attachments (e.g. a friend moves away, we change schools, a neighbor dies).

Lesson Plan: Grief in Literature *Cont'd***Main Activity:**

1. Comment on death and loss as it occurs in the literature that you use, and use the content to promote discussion, facilitate questions, and provide support. Alternatively, select a book that includes themes of death, dying, grief, or loss. For book ideas, refer to the **Booklists**. Read the text aloud, or ask students to read quietly.
2. While reading, encourage students to think about how the characters felt, how they expressed their grief, and what helped them.
3. After reading the text, ask student to complete the feeling web. What did the character feel? When and why did they feel that way?
4. In small groups, students can discuss their feeling webs. How did they know the character was feeling this way? Why do you think they felt \_\_\_\_\_?
5. Ask students to imagine that they were a part of the story. What would they do or say? What would comfort the grieving characters?

**Guiding Questions:**

- Are there personal connections you can make to the events in the text?
- Are the books by this author similar to another one you have read or are reading?
- Which books/movies/articles/online texts share a similar topic/theme/point of view?
- How does the author establish the mood of the text?

**Reflection:**

Reinforce the understanding that loss is universal, that grief can hurt, but it is possible to process even the most challenging experiences in a healthy way. Following this lesson, initiate a discussion about what people can do to express their feelings and emotions safely; and perhaps explore with students the consequences of burying feelings. Emphasize that not everyone expresses feeling verbally, but reading and writing are both great ways to do this. Ask students to complete a short writing project. Students could imagine themselves in the shoes of the main character and write a journal entry to express their feeling; or could write a letter or sympathy card to the character.

# Grief in Literature: Feelings Web

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Book: \_\_\_\_\_

When:

Why:

When:

Why:

Feeling:

Feeling:

Name of the Character:

Feeling:

Feeling:

When:

Why:

When:

Why:



# Lesson Plan: Grief in Literature

**Subject:** English (Reading and Literature Studies)

**Grade:** 7 - 10

**Ontario Curriculum Expectations:**

**Grade 7-8**

**1.6** extend understanding of texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, by connecting the ideas in them or their own knowledge, experience, and insights, to other familiar texts, and to the world around them

**1.7** analyse a variety of texts, both simple and complex, and explain how the different elements in them contribute to meaning and influence the reader's reaction

**Grade 9-10**

**1.5** extend understanding of both simple and complex texts by making connections between the ideas in them and personal knowledge, experience, and insights; other texts; and the world around them

**1.6** analyse texts in terms of the information, ideas, issues, or themes they explore, examining how various aspects of the texts contribute to the presentation or development of these elements

**Materials Needed:**

- Texts that provide examples of how characters respond to death, dying, & grief
- Fiction texts about someone who has died
- Non-fiction texts that demonstrate people's expression of grief

**Resources:**

- *Booklists*

**Students will...**

- Describe how writers explore themes of death, dying, and grief
- Discuss the ways that characters process their grief
- Draw connections between their experiences with grief and the grief experienced by characters

**Introduction:**

From Shakespeare to Plath, writers have taken on the theme of death, dying, and grief for centuries. Ask students to think of a story (book, poem, movie) that includes characters who dealt with death and grief. It will quickly become evident that the topic of death and grief is frequently explored in a variety of media. Tell your students that as a part of your study of literature, you'll be exploring the different ways the theme of grief appears in the text.

Lesson Plan: Grief in Literature *Cont'd***Main Activity:**

1. Comment on death and loss as it occurs in the literature that you use, and use the content to promote discussion, facilitate questions, and provide support. Alternatively, select a book that includes themes of death, dying, grief, or loss. For book ideas, refer to the Booklists.
2. Explain to students that you want them to think about what we learn from the text about how grief and loss shape us as human beings. While reading, instruct students to think about:
  - How characters are confronted by loss
  - How they respond to their grief
  - What do they see in the text that reminds them of some of grief that they've experienced
3. Select one, or several of the Guiding Questions, to discuss as a class.
4. Either as an in-class writing assignment or as homework, have students pick a character and explore how this character experiences grief. In their essays, students should consider the following questions:
  - What signs of grief do you see in the character?
  - How does the character cope with their grief?
  - What actions result from their experience of loss?

**Guiding Questions:**

- Why was the text written?
- What kind of loss/pain was experienced?
- What details help you know that the character is grieving?
- How does death, dying, and/or grief drive the plot?
- What techniques does the writer use to convey the feelings and experience of grief?
- What did you learn about grief?
- How did grief impact character development, and the relationships amongst characters?
- What would you say the character who is dying or grieving?
- How can you relate to what you've learned to losses in your life or those around you?
- Have your values or beliefs about death influenced your attitude towards this character?
- What cultural differences make this character's experiences different than your own?

**Reflection:**

Invite students to write a short story or poem about a personal loss or feelings that might be experienced in a situation of loss. Remind students that writing (i.e. journaling) is a healthy way to express and process feelings.

# Lesson Plan: Express Yourself

**Subject:** Art

**Grade:** 4 - 6

**Ontario Curriculum Expectations:**

**Grade 4**

**D1.1** create two- or three- dimensional works of art that express feelings and ideas inspired by their interests and experiences

**Grade 5**

**D1.1** create two- or three- dimensional works of art that express feelings and ideas inspired by their own and others' points of view

**Grade 6**

**D1.1** create two-, three dimensional, and multimedia art works that explore feelings, ideas, and issues from a variety of points of view

**Materials Needed:**

- *Express Yourself* Handout or Paper
- Coloured pencils/markers

**Resources:**

- *None*

**Students will...**

- Express and talk about different emotions
- Become aware of various places in their bodies they hold feelings
- Identify techniques used to express emotion

**Key Words:**

- **Cool colours:** Colours that suggest coolness (e.g. blue, green, purple).
- **Warm colours:** Colours that suggest warmth (e.g. red, yellow, orange).
- **Neutral colours:** Colours such as black and grey that are created by mixing equal proportion of complementary colours.

**Introduction:**

Colour can be a powerful way to convey emotions in artwork. Begin this lesson by introducing students to warm, cool, and neutral colours. Colours can be used to create mood, such as a blue-grey rainy scene or a bright yellow sunshine. For example, Picasso's Blue Period depicting his struggles with poverty and tragedy, was followed by his Rose Period, where he used reds, pinks, oranges and warm browns to paint cheerful and optimistic scenes.

Lesson Plan: Express Yourself *Cont'd***Main Activity:**

1. As a class, have a discussion about the many emotions and feelings that come with grief.
2. Distribute the *Express Yourself* handout or paper, and coloured pencils/markers.
3. Ask students to create a series of self-portraits identifying how they feel when they are: happy, sad, afraid, confused, surprised, lonely, excited, angry, and loved. Encourage students draw self-portraits of other emotions on the 3 blank boxes at the bottom of the handout
4. Students can create these self-portraits on one page or a series of pages. This activity can be completed quickly by only giving student a few minutes to complete each expression, or can be completed over several classes. Older students may prefer having a bigger page or canvas to draw more detail.
5. When they are finished, ask each student to identify what colours they used for each emotion. Are they warm, cool, or neutral?
6. In groups or as a class, students can compare their self-portraits. How is their expression of grief similar or different from their classmates?

**Guiding Questions:**

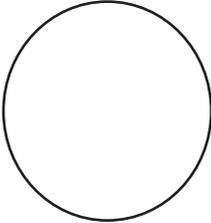
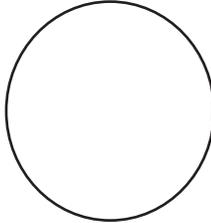
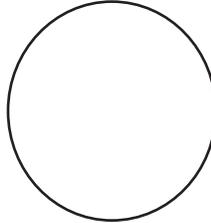
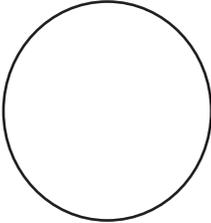
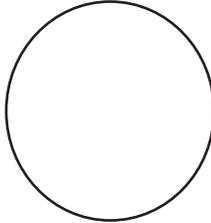
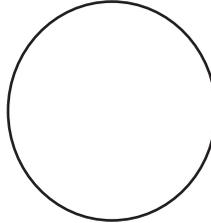
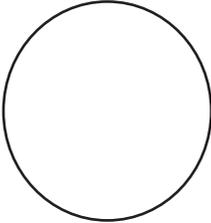
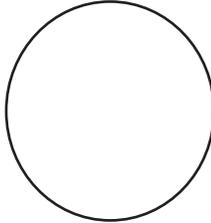
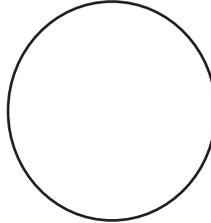
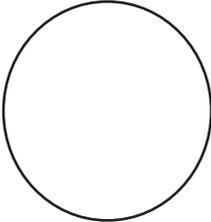
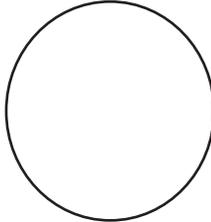
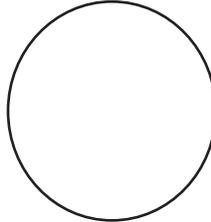
- Which emotion was the most challenging for you to draw?
- Which feelings are a part of your grief experiences? How does that compare with someone else's?
- How did you use size, shape, and colour to express your feelings?

**Reflection:**

Art-making can be a deeply validating way of expressing the complex thoughts and feelings that arise in grief. Encourage students to turn to art as a form of self-care and healthy way to express their feelings. The process of creating and sharing can help individuals work through their grief, and connect with inner ability to cope with loss.

## Express Yourself

Create self-portraits showing the many different emotions of grief. Experiment with colour, lines, texture, & shading to really express yourself!

 <b>Happy</b>	 <b>Sad</b>	 <b>Afraid</b>
 <b>Confused</b>	 <b>Surprised</b>	 <b>Lonely</b>
 <b>Excited</b>	 <b>Angry</b>	 <b>Loved</b>
 _____	 _____	 _____

# Lesson Plan: Grief in Art

**Subject:** Visual Arts

**Grade:** 7 - 10

**Ontario Curriculum Expectations:**

**Grade 7/8**

**D2.1** interpret a variety of art works and identify the feelings, issues, themes, and social concerns that they convey

**D2.3** demonstrate an understanding of how to read and interpret signs, symbols, and style in art works

**Grade 9/10**

**B1.1** identify and describe their initial reactions to a variety of works

**B1.2** identify on the basis of examination, elements and principles of design used in various art works, and describe their effects

**B2.3** identify ways in which creating and/or analyzing art works has affects their personal identity and values

**Materials Needed:** Internet & projector

**Resources:**

- *Grief with Andrea Bayer* by the Metropolitan Museum of Art (3:54)  
– <https://www.metmuseum.org/connections/grief#/Feature/>

**Students will...**

- Identify emotions expressed art pieces
- Analyze specific art pieces depicting death, dying, and grief
- Reflect on techniques used to convey experiences and emotions
- Develop understanding of principles of design

**Key Words:**

- **Lines:** For expressive purposes; diagonal and converging lines to create depth of space; repetition of lines to create visual rhythm.
- **Shapes and form:** Various shapes and forms, symbols, icons, logos, radial balance.
- **Space:** Use of blue or complementary colours in shadows and shading to create depth.
- **Colour:** Analogous colours; transparent colour created with watercolour or tissue paper decoupage.
- **Texture:** Textures creates with a variety of tools, materials, and techniques.

Lesson Plan: Grief in Art *Cont'd***Introduction:**

For centuries, artists have been attracted to depicting themes of life and death in their artwork. Artists in different cultures and different times in history have portrayed death in both symbolic and literal ways. Begin this lesson by asking students to talk about symbols or images they think of when they think about death and grief (i.e. gravestone, dove, skull and bones). Ask students: What images or design elements would symbolize their personal grief experiences?

**Main Activity:**

1. As a class, watch **Grief by the Metropolitan Museum of Art (3:54)**. Narrator Andrea Bayer walks through art pieces about grief and loss as she speaks about her personal response to the death of her parents.
2. Select some pieces to analyse together as a class. Some additional examples of paintings depicting themes of death and grief include:
  - *Death and Life* by Gustav Klimt (1916)
  - *At Eternity's Gate* by Vincent Van Gogh (1890)
  - *The Sick Child* by Edvard Munch (1907)
  - *Death and the Masks* by James Ensor (1897)
3. Individually, or in small groups, ask students to conduct on research on a piece and its artist. During their research, ask students to consider: What do they think the relationship between the artist's life and the piece is?
  - For example: Edvard Munch's life included a great deal of tragedy and illness, including the death of his mother and sister. These experiences influenced his work throughout his life.
4. Invite students to summarize their findings in a writing assignment, or present to the class.

**Guiding Questions:**

- What is your initial reaction to this image?
- What symbols can you identify in this art work?
- What mood do you think is created by the artist in each painting?
- How can art be seen as a visual metaphor?
- What emotions do you associate with certain design elements and principles?
- How does the artist use colour to convey a particular mood in this art work?
- If this figure in the art work could come to life, what would it say to you?

**Reflection:**

Ask students to reflect on how these works affect their personal awareness of their emotions and their ability to express them, and their level of empathy of those who have lost a loved one? The process of creating and sharing can help individuals work through their grief and connect with others. Following this lesson, encourage students to produce a piece of art representing their grief experiences. Ask students, if their grief was a person, animal, or thing, what would it look like?

## J. Looking After Yourself

### To be of help and support to a child you need to take care of yourself.

Speaking with children about death can be stressful and overwhelming. As you invite students to engage in difficult conversations, you may have to support a child experiencing emotional pain and distress. While it is important to support your students, it is important to look after yourself. Keep in mind that discussions about death may have an emotional impact on you too.

#### It may be helpful to remember the following:

- You are not responsible for a child's grief and you cannot carry it for them, but you can do your best to offer them support.
- Offering support is easier if you understand how children grieve. Check out more resources or connect with other professionals to develop strategies to support students.
- Learn the support procedures that your school system and community already has in place and know how to access them.
- Identify and connect with your own support system, and know how to access support when you have any issues that are concerning, or which have a personal impact. Debrief about what is affecting you.
- It is helpful to know your limitations, do not feel pressured to offer more than you are comfortable delivering.
- At the end of a difficult conversation, take time for yourself. You will be better able to face tomorrow if you are kind to yourself today.
- Whether you're helping a grieving child or coping with your own grief, the advice and reassurance of other experienced professionals may help. There is no wrong time and there doesn't need to be a crisis in order for you to reach out.

For more information on "**The Importance of Self-Care When Helping Your Child or Youth Grieve**" visit <https://familyedcentre.org/parent-resource-library/>

*Tip sheets and podcasts are available in Arabic, English, French, Mandarin, Punjabi, Spanish, and Urdu!*

## K. Next Steps

It takes many individuals to create compassionate school community. A **Whole School Approach** integrates health promotion into every aspect of school life by providing opportunities for death education, as well as appropriate and timely support (Paul, 2015).

### A Whole School Approach



Figure adapted from A Road Less Lonely – Section 4  
Death Education and Bereavement Support in Schools  
(Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief, 2018)

### A whole school approach includes:

- **Resources:** Excellent resources go to waste if people are unaware of them. It is important that resources are accessible. For a summary of available resources, check **Appendix A – Resources for Supporters** and **Appendix B – Resources for Children, Youth, & Teens**.
- **Teamwork:** Students, teachers, staff, parents, and community partner can collaborate to promote the mental, emotional, social and physical health of students.
- **Staff Health & Wellbeing:** A compassionate school begins with a compassionate workplace. Staff should be offered support when engaging with grieving children, or coping with their own grief.
- **Leadership:** Change within schools requires enthusiastic and committed leadership. Strong support from leaders is important when adopting and initiating new plans/policies.
- **Climate:** A compassionate school is supportive and welcoming of discussions surrounding illness, death, and grief.
- **Death Education:** Lessons with a specific focus on death and grief are including in curriculum help students understand death as a natural part of the life cycle and equip them to deal with loss and change.

## How do you encourage a whole school approach?

**Collaborate:** Start building a team to help take this project on. Start small by sharing a resource or starting a conversation with a colleague.

- **Idea:** Model and learn from other successful programs and initiatives.
- **First Step:** Reach out to community members doing similar work to learn from and with them. Try contacting local hospices, mental health organizations, or schools taking on a similar initiative.

**Improve staff confidence:** Provide opportunities for staff to develop their confidence so they feel better prepared to support students and colleagues coping with grief.

- **Idea:** Offer workshops for teachers on death education, and how to speak with students about dying and grief.
- **First step:** Approach school boards and administrators to advocate for the inclusion of death and grief related content on professional development days. Share resources with colleagues including **Tips for Teachers (Appendix E) and Tips for Students (Appendix F)**.

**Develop policies:** Policies provide a framework for how to support students and staff prior to, during, and after a death.

- **Idea:** Regularly review policies and compare to current best practices and evidence.
- **First Step:** Assess current approaches to grief and make recommendations to improve support and communication between staff, administration, families, and the community. Check out **Appendix G – Responsibility Checklist** for an idea of actions that should be including in grief and bereavement policies.

**Develop Awareness about Children’s Grief:** Community education helps ensure support is widespread, offered at various levels of needs, and is accessible through various outlets.

- **Idea:** Host a Children's Grief Awareness Day.
- **First Step:** The **Children’s Grief Awareness Family Day Toolkit** by the Children and Youth Grief Network offers tips, tricks, and templates to launch a grief awareness event in your community. To receive a copy, please email [info@childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com](mailto:info@childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com)

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★ Font on cover page, titled *Action Jackson*, is credited to *Divide by Zero*.



	Age 2-4	Age 4-7	Age 7-11	Age 11-18
<b>Developmental Stage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Egocentric</li> <li>Believe world centers around them</li> <li>Struggle to cognitively understand of death</li> <li>Limited language skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gaining a sense of autonomy</li> <li>Gaining Language</li> <li>Fantasy wishing and thinking as the initiator</li> <li>Concerns of guilt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concrete thinking</li> <li>Self-confidence develops</li> <li>Beginning of socialization</li> <li>Development of cognitive ability</li> <li>Beginning of logical thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal operational problem solving</li> <li>Abstract thinking</li> <li>Integration of one's own personality</li> </ul>
<b>Concept of Death</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Death seen as reversible, as abandonment, not permanent</li> <li>May ask, "Did you know my mom died? When will she be home?"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Death still seen as reversible</li> <li>Personification of death because of wishes and thoughts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Death seen as punishment</li> <li>Fear of bodily harm and mutilation</li> <li>Still wanting to see death as reversible but beginning to see it as final</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A more "ADULT" approach</li> <li>Ability to abstract</li> <li>Beginning to conceptualize death</li> <li>Work at making sense of teachings</li> </ul>
<b>Grief Response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intensive but brief</li> <li>Very present oriented</li> <li>Most aware to changes in patterns of care</li> <li>Asking questions repeatedly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More verbalization</li> <li>Great concern with process</li> <li>How? Why? Repetitive questions</li> <li>May act as though nothing has happened</li> <li>General distress and confusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific questions</li> <li>Desire for complete detail</li> <li>Concerned with how others are responding</li> <li>Starting to have ability to mourn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extreme sadness</li> <li>Denial</li> <li>More often willing to talk to people outside of family and peer support</li> <li>Risk taking</li> </ul>
<b>Signs of Distress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regression</li> <li>Changes in eating and sleeping patterns</li> <li>Bed wetting</li> <li>General irritability and confusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regression</li> <li>Nightmares, sleeping and eating disturbed</li> <li>Possible violent play</li> <li>Attempts to take on role of person who died</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regression</li> <li>School problems, withdrawal from friends</li> <li>Acting out</li> <li>Sleeping and eating disturbed</li> <li>Overwhelming concern with body</li> <li>Desire to join loved one</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Depression</li> <li>Anger often towards parents</li> <li>Suicidal thoughts</li> <li>Non-compliance</li> <li>Rejection of former teaching</li> <li>Acting out</li> </ul>
<b>Possible Interventions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short, honest answers</li> <li>Frequent repetition</li> <li>Lots of re-assurance and nurturing</li> <li>Consistent Routine</li> <li>Play as outlet for grief</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Symbolic play using drawings and stories</li> <li>Allow and encourage expression of energy and feelings through physical outlets</li> <li>Talk about it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage expression of range of feelings</li> <li>Explain options and allow for choices</li> <li>Be available but allow alone time</li> <li>Allow for physical outlets</li> <li>Listen, talk about the death, and answer questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage verbalization</li> <li>Allow for choices</li> <li>Encourage self-motivation</li> <li>Listen</li> <li>Be available</li> <li>Do not attempt to take grief away</li> </ul>
<p>Summarized by the <b>Children and Youth Grief Network</b>. Resource developed using content from the following websites:</p> <p><a href="http://childhoodberea.wpengine.com/developmental-grief-responses/#.WEqWSE3rvcc">http://childhoodberea.wpengine.com/developmental-grief-responses/#.WEqWSE3rvcc</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/developmental-grief-responses/">http://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/developmental-grief-responses/</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.vitas.com/resources/grief-and-bereavement/child-development-stages">http://www.vitas.com/resources/grief-and-bereavement/child-development-stages</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content.aspx?ContentTypeID=90&amp;ContentID=P03044">https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content.aspx?ContentTypeID=90&amp;ContentID=P03044</a></p>				

## The Children and Youth Grief Network – [www.childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com](http://www.childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com)

### Resources include:

- 6 module videos series with Andrea Warnick
- Interactive map of services in Peel and GTA
- Quarterly newsletter
- Handbook for Supporters
- Needs Assessment
- Literature Search

### Children and Youth Grief Network members:

#### Acclaim Health

[www.acclaimhealth.ca](http://www.acclaimhealth.ca)

#### Andrea Warnick Consulting

[www.andreawarnick.com](http://www.andreawarnick.com)

#### Bereaved Families of Ontario - Halton/Peel

[www.bereavedfamilies.ca](http://www.bereavedfamilies.ca)

#### Bethell Hospice

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

#### C. Elizabeth Dougherty Consulting

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

#### Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre

[www.drjaychildrensgriefcentre.ca](http://www.drjaychildrensgriefcentre.ca)

#### Family Education Centre

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

#### Heart House Hospice

[www.hearhousehospice.com](http://www.hearhousehospice.com)

#### Lauren Barrett

[laurelynbarrett@gmail.com](mailto:laurelynbarrett@gmail.com)

#### The Carpenter Hospice

[www.thecarpenterhospice.com](http://www.thecarpenterhospice.com)

#### The Dorothy Ley Hospice

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

#### The Lighthouse for Grieving Children

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

#### Victoria Hagerman

[victoriahagerman@hotmail.com](mailto:victoriahagerman@hotmail.com)

## Online Resources for School Professionals

**The Resilience Project** by Strathcarron Hospice, Universities of Stratclyde and Edinburgh, & St Francis Xavier Primary School

- Consists of 5 lessons covering subjects of death, loss, and grief intended for students aged 9 to 12 years old. Lesson address outcomes of health, science, and religious curriculum areas.
  - <https://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/news/news/the-resilience-project/>

**Schools Information Pack** by Winston's Wish or SeeSaw

- Provides resources and strategies for responding to a death in the school community, including: aids for speaking with students, tips for supporting bereaved students, memorial activities, and a framework for a school bereavement policy.
  - [https://www.winstonswish.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Schools\\_Information\\_Pack.pdf](https://www.winstonswish.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Schools_Information_Pack.pdf)
  - <http://www.seesaw.org.uk/Portals/0/Schools%20Pack%20Final-%20Revised%202008.pdf>

**Positive Responses to Death: A Strategy for Schools** by Winston's Wish

- Guidelines to assist your school in developing a strategy to respond to a death in the school community.
  - <https://www.winstonswish.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ww-0153-strat-for-schools-hi.pdf>

**Listen with Eyes, Ears and Heart** by Irish Childhood Bereavement Network

- An online resource that aims to empower primary school teachers to support a student in their class following a death.
  - <http://www.childhoodbereavement.ie/childhoodbereavementprofessionals/supporting-schools/schools/#.WzEfw1VKipr>



### Books for School Professionals:

**Student Dies, A School Mourns: Dealing With Death and Loss in the School** by Ralph L. Klicker

- Provides systematic guide for developing a death-related crisis response plan. Extensive coverage is given to youth suicide and violence/murder.

**The Grieving Student** by David J. Schonfeld & Marcia Quackenbush

- A how-to guide to give students the support they need to cope with grief and work their way back to full participation in academic and social life.

**When Death Impacts Your School: A Guide for School Administrators** by The Dougy Center

- Includes instructions for developing a school intervention plan, issues related to suicide and violence, and knowing when outside help is needed.

**Helping the Grieving Student: A Guide for Teachers** by The Dougy Center

- This guidebook is an essential resource for teachers, offering practical tips and information for how to respond to a death.

**A Child's View of Grief: A Guide for Parents, Teachers, and Counselors** by Alan D. Wolfelt

- Explains how children and teens grieve after someone has died and how the adults in their life can help children and teens cope with grief.

**Supporting Bereaved Students at School** edited by Jacqueline A. Brown and Shane R. Jimerson

- Provides strategies that can be used to support students from diverse backgrounds and with diverse needs.

### Books for Caregivers:

**When a Parent is Sick: Helping Parents Explain Serious Illness to Children** by Joan Hamilton

- This book provides parents and caregivers with suggestions on how to approach children with the information that their parent is seriously ill.

**Great Answers to Difficult Questions about Death: What Children Need to Know** by Linda Goldman

- Explores children's thoughts and feelings related to death and provide parents and other adults, guidance on how to respond to difficult questions.

**Living Dying: A Guide for Adults Support Grieving Children and Teenagers** by Ceilidh Eaton Russell

- Includes suggestions for talking to children about illness and death, including them in care, and maintaining meaningful connections.

**Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens: 100 Practical Ideas** by Alan D. Wolfelt

- Offers a list of ideas for honoring and remembering a loved one, and supporting, interacting, and communication with a grieving teen.

### Websites

**Coalition to Support Grieving Students** – [grievingstudents.org](http://grievingstudents.org)

- Features modules made by school personnel to empower school communities in the ongoing support of grieving students.

**National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement** – [schoolcrisiscenter.org](http://schoolcrisiscenter.org)

- Resources that encourage best practices in crisis and grief support in schools, and research in the fields of childhood bereavement and disaster preparedness.

**National Alliance for Grieving Children** – [childrengrieve.org](http://childrengrieve.org)

- Network for communication between hundreds of professionals and volunteers who want to share ideas, information, and resources.

**Kids Grief** – [kidsgrief.ca](http://kidsgrief.ca)

- Includes a series of 3 learning modules that provide strategies and talking points to help caregivers address tough subjects with a grieving child.

**The Dougy Center** – [dougy.org](http://dougy.org)

- Provides educational materials about grief from childhood to adulthood. Free grief resources include articles, tip sheets, and podcasts.



## Websites *cont'd*

### **Winston's Wish** – [winstonswish.org.uk](http://winstonswish.org.uk)

- Offers practical support and guidance for caregivers, and identifies specialized resources for deaths related to serious illness, murder, suicide, or military service.

### **Living My Culture** – [livingmyculture.ca](http://livingmyculture.ca)

- Features people from various cultures sharing their stories and wisdom about living with serious illness, end of life, and grief to support others.

### **My Grief** – [mygrief.ca](http://mygrief.ca)

- Offers resources to help bereaved individuals understand grief and work through some of the difficult issues they may be facing.

### **What's Your Grief?** – [whatsyourgrief.com](http://whatsyourgrief.com)

- Blog posts cover topics including grief education, supporting kids/teens, suggestions for coping, and ways to honour and remember loved ones.

### **Sesame Street Grief Toolkit** – [sesamestreet.org/toolkits/grief](http://sesamestreet.org/toolkits/grief)

- Includes tips, videos, a story, and activities to help your family members communicate with one another, express emotions, and begin moving forward.

## Books

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

- This book addresses children's feelings and questions about death in a simple, realistic way to help them understand that death is a natural part of life and that grief and a sense of loss are normal feelings for them to have after a loved one's death.

### **When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death** by Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Brown

- Offers a compassionate explanation of death, dying, and coping with grief and loss in simple language for young kids and families. This book also discusses the more difficult subjects of suicide, war, prejudice and poverty, and explains death rituals from several different cultures.

### **Lifetimes: A Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children** by Brian Mellonie and Robert Ingpen

- This book illustrates how the living and dying is a natural process, for all living things. The book also discusses the life cycle of various plants and animals as well as humans, in simple and direct language.

### **The Invisible String** by Patrice Karst

- This book is a simple approach to overcome the fear of loneliness or separation from those we love whether by distance or death. We are all connected by a very special string made of love and even though you may not be able to see it, you can feel it deep in your heart.

### **Ida, Always** by Caron Levis

- Gus lives in a big park in the middle of an even bigger city, and he spends his days with Ida. Then one sad day, Gus learns that Ida is very sick, and she isn't going to get better. Slowly Gus realizes that even after Ida is gone, she will still be with him.

### **The Next Place** by Warren Hanson

- This is a book that explores where people go when they leave 'this place.' It presents a beautiful and hopeful view of where people go when they die.

### **Life is Like the Wind** by Irisz Agocs and Shone Innes

- Introduces the concept of death to young readers by likening life to the ever-moving wind. When the wind is present, things move and fly and flutter about. When the wind goes away, things become very still.

### **Straight Talk About Death for Teenagers** by Earl A. Grollman

- This book explains what to expect when you lose someone you love. Chapters discuss reactions to a death, how grief can affect your relationships, and how to work through your grief.

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

- This book addresses difficult emotions and situations young people may experience, including family changes, problems at school, and finding the courage to move forward.

### **We Get It: Voices of Grieving College Students and Young Adults** by Heather L. Servaty-Seib and David C. Fajgenbaum

- Students and young adults face a unique set of challenges. This book is a collection of stories covering topics including isolation, forced maturity, and coping strategies.

## Journals and Activity Books

### **When Someone Has a Very Serious Illness or When Someone Very Special Dies** by Marge Eaton Heegaard

- An activity book to help children learn the basic concepts of death as well as to understand and express the feelings they have when someone special dies.

### **Angel Catcher: A Journal of Loss and Remembrance** by Kathy Eldon & Amy Eldon Turteltaub

- This journal is designed to help people through death and celebrate the life of a loved one. There is space for photographs, reflection, thoughts, and memories.

### **Chill & Spill: A Place to Put it Down and Work it Out** by Steffanie Lorig & Jeanean Jacobs

- A journal for young people to "spill their guts and chill out". A combination of writing, drawing, and collaging activities help explore what's going on their your heads and hearts.

## Journals and Activity Books *cont'd*

### Draw it Out by Art with Heart

- A therapeutic activity book for elementary-aged kids with complex and confusing emotions. Serves as a springboard for starting conversations and helping kids cope with loss.

### Deconstruction/Reconstruction: A Grief Journal for Teens by the Dougy Center

- An advice-free place where teens can draw, write, paint, and transforms whatever they are thinking and feeling.

### Fire in My Heart, Ice in My Veins: A Journal for Teenagers Experiencing Loss by Enid Samuel Traisman

- Here young people can honour, record, and realize their many thoughts, feelings, and questions related to the death and to their memories.

### Ink About It by Annie McCall, Kate Gardener, & Steffanie Lorig (Art with Heart)

- Features activities, prompts, posters, and colouring pages that explore topics including: friendship, fun, stress, coping with loss and change, and dreams.

### The Healing Your Grieving Heart Journals for Teens by Alan Wolfelt & Megan Wolfelt

- Affirms the grieving teen's journey and offers gentle, healing guidance to begin sorting through confusing feelings and thoughts.

### Self-Compassion Workbook for Teens by Karen Bluth

- Offers tools based in mindfulness and self-compassion to help teens overcome self-judgement and self-criticism, and cultivate compassion.

### A Still Quiet Place for Teens by Amy Saltzman

- Help teens balance emotions, stay focused, and experience the natural quietness that lives within.

## Websites

### Cancer Really Sucks – [cancerreallysucks.org](http://cancerreallysucks.org)

- A website designed by teens who have loved ones facing cancer. Site invites teens to share their story, provides suggestions for coping, and recommends resources.

### Heal Grief – [healgrief.org](http://healgrief.org)

- A social support network that is there when everyone else goes away, and the real grieving process continues. Provides resources and opportunities for legacy work.

### Help 2 Make Sense – [help2makesense.org](http://help2makesense.org)

- When someone close to you dies, nothing makes sense. This online toolkit features tips and resources to help make sense of grief.

### Surviving Life After a Parent Dies (SLAP'D) – [slapd.com](http://slapd.com)

- A social media site to help teens find hope and connection through shared experiences. Includes articles, advice forums, and an ask-an-expert column.

### Hope Again – [hopeagain.org.uk](http://hopeagain.org.uk)

- Features advice, stories, and vlogs of young people who are grieving. Offers ideas on how to cope, talk about grief, stay connected, and tips for carrying on.

### Too Damn Young – [toodamnyoung.com](http://toodamnyoung.com)

- A community built by and for grieving teens. The site features articles, personal accounts, and outlets for teens to express themselves and connect.

### Teen Mental Health – [TeenMentalHealth.org](http://TeenMentalHealth.org)

- Offers tools to learn about and maintain mental health. Resources cover a variety of topics including sleep, stress, and the stigma surrounding mental illness.

### Youth Anxiety – [youth.anxietybc.com](http://youth.anxietybc.com)

- Site contains information to help people learn about and practice effective strategies to manage anxiety on their own, at their own pace.

### Kids Help Phone – [kidshelpphone.ca](http://kidshelpphone.ca) or call 1-800-886-6868

- 24-hour, anonymous, and confidential phone counselling. Live chat with a Kids Help Phone counsellor online, or through the free **Always There** app.

Dear Families and Caregivers,

In an effort to maintain open communication, I would like to inform you that conversations about death, dying, and grief will be integrated into classroom discussions. The **Grief and Death Education Toolkit: Talking about Death, Dying, and Grief in the Classroom** is a resource created by The Children and Youth Grief Network.

Based on aspects of The Ontario Curriculum, this resource was developed to help teachers facilitate lessons with a focus on death and grief as a part of the life cycle, our history and our present. By integrating death education into the existing curriculum, students are likely to better recognize and cope with grief when a death occurs. Although talking about death can be challenging, emotional, and awkward at times, it is important to create a classroom environment where the experience of grief is shared and supported in a compassionate way.

Every student will understand death and grief in their own unique way, and their reaction to death education may be influenced by a number of factors such as their emotional maturity, religious beliefs, cultural background, and previous experiences of illness and death. While the school will continue to do everything we can do to support student mental health and well-being, these conversations may be emotionally triggering. In order to best support your child, it would be helpful to know if they have experienced, or are anticipating, the death of someone in their life. If at any point you notice your child is struggling with the content of these lessons, please notify the school so we can provide you and your child with additional support.

Speaking about grief naturally brings up many questions about life, death and dying from your child. While I will try my best to address questions in ways that are sensitive, appropriate, and respectful, your child may ask you questions or tell you what they have learned. These questions provide a great opportunity for you to share your feelings and offer support. For suggestions that may help with the conversation, please visit <https://familyedcentre.org/parent-resource-library/>. Tip sheet and podcast topics include: **Communicating With Your Child or Youth About Grief** and **Tips for Recognizing a Grieving Child or Youth**. If you would like more information on children's grief, please refer to the resource list attached to this letter.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Sincerely,



## Resources for Talking about Death, Dying, and Grief

### Books

**A Child's View of Grief: A Guide for Parents, Teachers, and Counselors** by Alan D. Wolfelt

This book explains how children and teens grieve after someone you loved has died and how the adults in their life can help children and teens cope with grief.

**When a Parent is Sick: Helping Parents Explain Serious Illness to Children** by Joan Hamilton

This book provides parents and caregivers with suggestions on how to approach children with the information that their parent is seriously.

**Great Answers to Difficult Questions about Death: What Children Need to Know** by Linda Goldman

This book explores children's thoughts and feelings related to death and provide parents and other adults, guidance on how to respond to difficult questions.

**Living Dying: A Guide for Adults Support Grieving Children and Teenagers** by Ceilidh Eaton Russell

This book includes suggestions for talking about illness and death with young people, including them in the care of the dying, and maintaining meaningful connections after a loved one has died.

**Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens: 100 Practical Ideas** by Alan D. Wolfelt

Offers a list of ideas for honoring and remembering a loved one, and supporting, interacting, and communicating with a grieving teen.

### Websites

**Children and Youth Grief Network** – [childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com](http://childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com)

Features links to additional resources, a video series on how to support grieving children at school, and an interactive map displaying services available in Region of Peel and GTA.

**Kids Grief** – [kidsgrief.ca](http://kidsgrief.ca)

Includes a series of 3 learning modules that provide strategies and talking points to help caregivers address tough subjects with a grieving child.

**The Dougy Center** – [dougy.org](http://dougy.org)

Provides educational materials about grief from childhood to adulthood. Free grief resources include articles, tip sheets, and podcasts.

**Winston's Wish** – [winstonswish.org.uk](http://winstonswish.org.uk)

Offers a range of practical support and guidance for caregivers, and identifies specialized resources for children affected by deaths related to serious illness, murder, suicide, or military.

**What's Your Grief?** – [whatsyourgrief.com](http://whatsyourgrief.com)

Blog posts cover a variety of topics including grief education, supporting kids/teens, suggestions for coping, ideas for self-expression, and ways to honour and remember loved ones.

**Sesame Street Grief Toolkit** – [sesamestreet.org/toolkits/grief](http://sesamestreet.org/toolkits/grief)

Includes tips, videos, a story, and activities to help your family members communicate with one another, express emotions, and begin the process of moving forward.



Dear Teachers,

When a student in your classroom experiences the dying and/or death of someone in their life, it may be helpful to consider the following tips:

1. Be aware of common grief reactions – It can be helpful to know what changes you may notice when a student is grieving. However, there is no right or wrong way to grieve. As long as they are not hurting themselves or others, you can reassure the student that their feelings and thoughts are natural and valid.
2. Let the grieving student have choices – Talk to the student and their family to find out what information, if any, they want to share with others. While many grieving students want the death to be acknowledged in some way, some students wish to tell their classmates about the death themselves, while others would rather that the teacher take on this task.
3. Speak to the student's class about grief – If possible, discuss with your class how they can support a grieving classmate. You may be able to provide classmates, or the student's close friends, with an opportunity to demonstrate support.
4. Listen more, talk less – Listening is one of the most supportive ways to respond to a grieving student. Ask questions and listen without interrupting, assuming, evaluating, or offering advice.
5. Provide learning supports and flexibility in the classroom – Students often have difficulty concentrating or learning while they are grieving. They may benefit from tutoring, extra time, or temporary changes in their test schedules.
6. Maintain boundaries and routine – Although a level of sensitivity and flexibility is needed, maintaining clear expectations can be helpful to grieving students. For some, the structure of school provides a sense of safety and security.
7. Provide support over time – Grief is not something to “get over”, but is something a person will cope with for the rest of their life. Be mindful of important days like anniversaries, birthdays, holidays, and milestones that may trigger memories or emphasize the absence of the deceased person. Ask the student how they would like to deal with these days, rather than assuming. For instance, some students may make a father's day card for their father who has died, others may want to give that card to another caregiver, or they may not want to participate at all.
8. Lookout for warning signs – If you notice any profound and prolonged changes such as: anxiety, risk-taking behaviors, suicidal thoughts or self-harm, connect with your school's mental health staff for appropriate referrals and resources.
9. It's OK to show your feelings – This is an important opportunity to show children healthy ways to express and cope with grief. Be honest with how you are feelings and find outlets for your feelings. Don't be afraid to reach out for support.
10. Allow the student to take breaks – Arrange and allow time and space for a grieving student to talk a 'time out' when they are feeling overwhelmed by their grief or have been hit by an unexpected grief burst or trigger.

**Thank you** for taking the time to read these tips for supporting grieving students. You play a unique role in their lives and can have a positive impact by providing support, understanding, and acceptance.



Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

It can be difficult to go back to school after someone in your life has died. You may be worried about what classmates will say, or how you will be able to focus in class.

Here are some tips for going back to school:

1. It's okay to have many feelings – You may feel sad, joyful, angry, lonely, guilty, and hopeful. The emotions of grief can change quickly, and it is normal to feel some or all of these feelings in a day.
2. There is no right way to grieve – Everyone deals with their grief in their own way. As long as you're not putting yourself/others in danger or disrupting classmates' learning, there is no wrong way to grieve.
3. Take care of yourself – Try to get a goodnight's sleep, eat foods that are healthy, and get plenty of exercise.
4. Find support at school – Find someone to talk to about the loss. This could be a friend, teacher, coach, counsellor, or principal.
5. Don't be too hard on yourself – If you are grieving longer than you think you "should" be, remember grief isn't something you "get over" and it can be different for everyone.
6. Create a routine – Having a routine can help cope with some of the grief by providing structure. Try setting small goals for yourself throughout the day.
7. Express yourself – Find ways to let your emotions out at school. Write in a journal, draw, paint, or read a book.
8. Have fun – It is okay to spend time with friends, laugh out loud, play a sport, watch a funny movie, dance or listen to music. You may not always feel like it, but it's important to spend some time having fun and enjoy life, even when you are grieving a death.
9. Spend some time alone – Silence is okay. If you are struggling in class, ask to go for a walk, get a drink of water, or find a quiet place at school to sit.
10. Know when and where to seek help – It can be tough to know when professional help is needed. Seek help if you have difficulty. Even if you think counselling isn't right for you, they may be able to suggest other options.

**Thank you** for taking the time to read these tips. While grief is not something we 'get over' or 'move on from', with care and attention, strong grief feelings can become softer as we learn to cope with them in a safe way.

Dear Classmates,

If you know someone who is grieving, you might be wondering how you can help.

Here are some tips on what you could say or do:

1. Say something – It is common to want to avoid saying the wrong thing, but it can be really helpful to let your classmate know that you know about what happened, and that you care about them.
2. Be patient – Understand that everyone grieves differently.
3. Check in – A quick text, call, or visit can be a good way to see how they are doing and let them know you are thinking of them.
4. Cry and laugh with them – It is ok to be honest with how you are feeling. It can be reassuring to know that they are not alone.
5. “How are you?” – Don't assume that just because your friend looks and sounds fine that they are “over” the death. Feelings can change quickly, and can even surprise the person who is grieving so try not to assume you know how the person feels on any given day.
6. Listen – Let your friend know that you're there to listen. Being there to listen is one of the best ways you can support someone who is grieving. Try not to offer advice unless they ask for it.
7. Talk about their loved one – If the name of the person who died comes up, talk about them rather instead of trying to avoid it. When it feels “right”, ask your classmate if they want to share memories or stories.
8. Help reduce school stress – Offer to pick up their homework, share class notes, or study with them.
9. Respect the person's wishes to be alone – Include your friend as much as possible, but understand and respect their decision if they want to spend some time alone. Even if they want to be alone a lot, or for a long time, keep inviting them to join you – they will when they're ready.
10. Understand if they don't want to talk about it – never force someone to open up, but let them know you are there if they want to talk about their loss. Silence is okay, even if it feels awkward.
11. Let them know you are thinking of them – If you can, go to the visitation, funeral, or ceremony, or you could write them a card, make them a playlist, or bring them something to eat.

**Thank you** for taking the time to read these tips for supporting a grieving classmate.

Encourage the person to seek help from an adult if you are worried about them, and ask an adult if you have any questions about grief or how to support your grieving friend.



## Responsibility Checklist

Responding to a death in the school community involves the coordination of many individuals, including the crisis response team, principal, teachers, counselors, community, and media. The chart below is an extract from ***A Student Dies, A School Mourns* by Ralph L. Klicker (1999)**, and outlines some actions to consider following the death of a student. Some of these actions aren't necessarily followed if it's not the death of a student.

Action	Yes	No	Whom
Death information confirmed			
Crisis Team contacted			
Crisis Team meeting scheduled			
Statement to be read by teachers written			
Statement for press written			
Telephone inquiry statement written			
Superintendent notified			
Other school principals notified			
Flag lowered			
Outside consultants contacted			
Staff notified via telephone tree			
Staff meeting scheduled			
Headquarters Room designated			
Crisis Room designated			
Media Room designated			
At-risk students/staff identified			
At-risk students/staff contacted and support provided			
Statement read to classes by teachers			
Supportive statement made by principal by intercom			
Staff assigned to crisis rooms			
Grief literature made available in library			
Parents notified of death and school's response			
Deceased's family contacted			
Substitute teachers contacted			
"Tips for Teachers" handout distributed (Appendix C)			
"Suggestions for Students" handout distributed (Appendix D)			
Additional security contacted			

**Responsibility Checklist** *cont'd*

<b>Action</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Whom</b>
Letter of condolence to deceased family's sent			
Flowers sent to funeral home			
Funeral director contacted about student visitation			
Students informed about funeral etiquette			
Second staff meeting scheduled			
Student attendance at funeral organized			
Faculty freed up to attend funeral			
School remembrance service planned			
School remembrance service held			
Deceased's belongings collected			
Deceased's belonging given to family			
Evaluation meeting scheduled			
Evaluation report written			
Provide referrals and resources to affected individuals			
Follow-up call with grieving family at 1 week and 1 month			
Develop long-term care plan for grieving students			