



Using journaling to process loss and grief with children and teens

By Kira Lallas, LMSW

Journaling can be a very helpful way for children and teens to process their feelings. This can be done in a family journaling time that is set aside and used as a way to help everyone talk and express themselves, or as a way for a child or teen to process their emotions in a private way.

Depending on age and personality, you may want to use some of these prompts for journaling with your child. If your child does not yet write, or doesn't like to write, you could also offer to be your child's "scribe" and write for them as they speak.

You might use these writing leads:

- What was the most recent thing that reminded you of your loved one who died? What did it remind you of?
- What would you say to your loved one if they were sitting with you right now?
- What has happened recently that you would like to share with your loved one?
- What would your loved one be happy to hear about since they died?
- How do you/will you remember your loved one?
- The body dies, but what about the non-physical? Do you believe in a "spirit"? What do you believe happens to a person after they die?
- Life will be different after a loved one dies, but it continues. Where will you find love? Laughter? Who can you count on?

Or you might want to write directly to your loved one. Here are some phrases that you might begin with:

- Something happened the other day that I wanted to tell you about. It was...
- What I miss most about you is...
- One thing I don't miss about you is...
- I want you to know that...
- I get mad at you sometimes since you died because...
- I will remember you by...
- Something no one knew about me except you was...
- Something no one knew about you except me was...
- With you dying, I sometimes think about dying myself. I think about...

These are just some ideas – feel free to use your own, or just write freely.

If you have any questions, would like to talk to a grief counselor about further ideas, or would like some grief counseling for you and/or your child, please call Kira Lallas, LMSW, Hospice and Community Bereavement Counselor, at Hospicare: 607-272-0212.