



## Supporting Children Amid Loss

### Activities for Grieving Children

When a child experiences a loss, they often experience a wide range of emotions, which can be overwhelming and confusing. Children may struggle to name their emotions, and may express them in many ways, from acting out, to playing, to music or arts, to talking about it. As children grieve, it is important for them to know that they are supported and to know where they can find calm. Below are two activities that you can do with your children or the children in your congregation in order to talk about support systems.

#### **The Support Chain**

Many links can make a chain strong. You and your child can take time to think about all of the people and things that support your child and visualize them as links in a paper chain.

#### **Materials**

Paper or Construction paper  
Markers or Pens  
Scissors  
Tape or a stapler

#### **Steps**

Walk through these steps with your child.

- 1- Use the scissors to cut the paper into strips.
- 2- On each piece of paper, write down a person, animal, or activity that is a source of support that you can turn to. See below for some example questions to talk about together and answer.
- 3- Once you have many strips of paper, staple them together into a chain.
- 4- Hang your chain System of Support somewhere special so that you can remember your support system.

#### **Questions to Discuss**

What person, animal, place, or activity can I turn to...

- When I need a hug
- When I'm sad
- When I want to talk
- When I need a laugh
- When I need to cry
- When I'm bored
- When I want to play
- When I want to relax
- When I don't want to think about it
- When I'm mad
- When I want to remember
- When I need a special treat
- When I ...

## **Handful of Hope**

When children get overwhelmed, it can be difficult to help them find calm. This is an activity that will help you talk with your child about things that make them happy or that help them when they are feeling upset. Your child can keep their final drawing so that, whenever they do feel upset, it will help them remember something that they can try to find comfort.

### **Materials**

Paper  
Coloring Utensils  
Pen or pencil  
Your hand!

### **Steps**

Walk through these steps with your child.

- 1- On the paper, use a pen or pencil to trace your hand. Parents/adults can help children do this if needed.
- 2- Look at each of the fingers on your hand. One by one, draw or write inside or near each part of your hand:
  - a. Thumb – Someone you can ask for help
  - b. First Finger – Some place you can go to feel comforted
  - c. Second Finger – An activity that you do to feel good
  - d. Third Finger – A toy or piece of clothing that brings you comfort
  - e. Fourth Finger – Something that you're really good at that you can count on
  - f. Palm – Draw a picture of what “comfort” or “hope” looks like for you
- 3- When you're done, keep your drawing somewhere safe so you can look at it whenever you start to feel upset.

### **More Activities**

**Bonus Hand Activity!** If you want to use your hand to learn a calming and breathing skill that you can use anywhere and at any time, look [here](#).

### **Activity lists:**

- [Maine Center for Grieving Children Activities](#): For children, teens, families, etc. (scroll down to “Activities”)
- [When Someone Dies: A Child-Caregiver Activity Book](#), NAGC
- [Responding to Change and Loss](#): brief booklet on tips and activities, NAGC

### **Other Resources in this Series**

For tips and more information, see [Supporting Grieving Children Compass Points](#)

For more resources, see [Supporting Grieving Children Resource Roadmap](#)

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