



The Benedictine Counselor

Newsletter of Benedictine Counseling Services

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Message from the Director:

This newsletter continues the information about Grief and Loss, with particular emphasis on helping grieving children. Kathy Persson, formerly with Capitol Hospice, is the author of this information and is considered an expert in grief and loss. She co-authored the book

"Good Mourning," and copies are available upon request to our Catholic schools.

May this summer hold abundant blessings for all of you. May each of you and every child be safe and well until the 2007-2008 school year begins.



Kathleen Persson LCSW

**BCS Therapist, Supervisor and
School Counselor**

How Can We Help Grieving Children?

How can we help grieving children?

- Keep in mind that children grieve over time, as they become more developmentally able to understand the concept of death. They also grieve the loss of a parent or sibling or other significant person as major events come up in life; i.e., moving up grades, first date, graduation from elementary school, father-daughter dances, etc.
- The most important thing to remember is the power of presence. By being there with and for the child you have already helped. Listening is more important than having the answers.

- Be honest with the child and take the word death off the taboo list. Children deal best with facts and find them helpful.
- Remember that the child may be more disrupted by the changes in the environment than the death itself.
- Be consistent and maintain routine and stability at home and in school as best you can
- Allow the child to release his or her emotions. Call the feeling by its right name. ("I am angry, I am sad, I am hurt, I am frightened").
- Children need to talk about the death and will find someone to go to. Be as available as you can and be patient with the repetition.

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• Children deal with their feelings in their own way. Children cannot sustain emotional pain for long periods of time. Don't be alarmed if the child acts as if he or she is not grieving.

- Do not reject any emotions.
- Do not tell the child how or what to feel
- Keep in mind that death is not contagious
- Things generally get worse around the holidays
- If asked about death, be sure you speak plainly and let children know a person dies when the body stops working.

✦ Avoid cliché words that might confuse the child, such as the loved one "went away" "has gone to sleep", or "passed". Some children are afraid to sleep for fear that they will die when given this definition of death. Allow the child to express feelings with art, music, drama and story telling as well as discussing.

Mourning is the way that we express our grief. Mourning is how we heal. When we are open with our sorrow, we show our children that it is okay to feel and express the sadness we feel . We let them know it is okay for boys and girls, men and women, to cry. The way we deal with our losses is how we teach our children. (Hospice of the Finger Lakes, 2000, p13).

Resources for Children Experiencing Grief

35 Ways to Help a Grieving Child by the Dougy Center, 1999

Drawn from stories of children who have experienced grief and illustrated with children's own art work

A Child's Book about Death by Earl Grollman, 2001
Children ages 6 and older are given gentle assurance to help them understand death as a part of life

A New Heart for Hannah by Jessie Flynn 1994
This is for preschool and early elementary explaining organ donation

Animal Crackers by Bridget Marshall 1998
At Nanny's funeral, everyone gets a box of animal crackers to share along with happy memories

A Taste of Blackberries by Doris Buchanan Smith 1998
Late elementary and middle school

Bridge to Terabitha by Katherine Paterson 1977
A classic for middle school

Emily's Sadhappy Season by Stephanie Golightly Lowden 1993
Takes a look at a present-day confident little girl whose father dies suddenly

Goodbye Mousie by Robie Harris 2001
Ages 4-8; A pet mouse dies and learns it is okay to feel angry and sad

Feasts of the Ascension and Pentecost:

The feast of Easter is celebrated for 50 days, until the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. 40 days after Easter we celebrate Jesus' Ascension into heaven. He was born, suffered and died on the cross, rose again on Easter and ascended into heaven. St. Luke tells us that when the disciples watched Jesus disappear from view angels reminded them that Jesus will return in glory.

Meanwhile they would be filled with power by the Holy Spirit (Pentecost) and would be Jesus' witnesses to the ends of the earth.

For the rest of the year we are reminded that we are Jesus witnesses today in our families, in school, at work, and at play.

The **Anita Moreland Foundation** was begun to help BCS provide counseling and psychological assistance for people who would otherwise be unable to pay for services.

For more information contact: *Benedictine Counseling Services* below.

To contact *Benedictine Counseling Services*,
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