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## Childhood Traumatic Grief Resources for Youth


Coping with the death of someone you cared about can be one of the toughest things you've ever known. You can expect to be very sad and you might notice other things too. Some kids have one or more of these problems after a death: trouble sleeping, eating, and doing schoolwork; physical aches and pains; less interest in being with family and friends; and new worries. Those are all pretty typical after someone dies.

But you may have reactions that go beyond common grief reactions, called traumatic grief. When this happens, you may have a lot of thoughts about the way the person died, or find that any thoughts—even happy ones—of the person lead to upsetting memories of the way that person died. Because these thoughts are upsetting, you may not want to talk about the person or do things that remind you about the person or what happened. You may have negative thoughts or feelings about the death or have a lot of physical symptoms.

The NCTSN has resources on CTG to help you understand your traumatic grief reactions and ideas to help you feel better. You can find these materials on the following pages.

### NCTSN Resources for Parents and Caregivers

#### Recognizing and Responding to Childhood Traumatic Grief

[Childhood Traumatic Grief Additional Resources—For Children and Teens](#) <sup>[1]</sup> (2010) (PDF)  <sup>[2]</sup>

[Ready to Remember: Jeremy's Journey of Hope and Healing](#) <sup>[3]</sup> (PDF)  <sup>[2]</sup>

Ready to Remember tells the story of a 10-year-old boy following the tragic death of his father. Jeremy has reactions to traumatic reminders, and he struggles at school and at home. Developed for the school-age reader, with a caregiver guide, the illustrated book describes Jeremy's journey as he and his family get help and are able to enjoy happy memories together.

[Rosie Remembers Mommy: Forever in Her Heart](#) <sup>[4]</sup> (2015) (PDF)

*Rosie Remembers Mommy: Forever in Her Heart* is the story of a young girl who is struggling after the death of her mother. We follow Rosie as she expresses wishes to see her mom, feels reluctant about school, finds no pleasure in activities she formerly found enjoyable, wonders whether she could somehow have caused her mother's death, and even refuses her favorite meal that Daddy has made. Rosie and Daddy go to meet Anna, who works with children after someone dies. Through play, song, and art, Anna helps Rosie eventually cope with the loss of her mother. The story also helps illustrate how a parent can provide solace and support to a child after a death.

*This book is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Patricia Van Horn who championed the care of traumatized young children and families. She will stay forever in our hearts.*


#### Sibling Death and Childhood Traumatic Grief

The death of someone significant can be very difficult and sad for a child or teen, but when a sibling dies, the family faces a unique set of challenges. Siblings often have very complicated relationships. Sisters and brothers can experience conflicting feelings for each other. When a sibling dies, these past relationships and feelings can affect the surviving child's grief and the family's bereavement process.

[Sibling Death and Childhood Traumatic Grief: Information for Families](#) <sup>[5]</sup> (2009) (PDF)  <sup>[5]</sup>

This publication offers caregivers information about the particular grief reactions that a child may have when a brother or sister dies and provides tips to help the grieving child. An extensive listing of books—organized by age of the intended audience—websites, and videos is included. Sibling Death and Childhood Traumatic Grief also offers self-care advice for caregivers to help them cope with their own grief reactions.

[Sibling Death and Traumatic Grief Additional Resources—For Caregivers](#) <sup>[7]</sup> (2010) (PDF)  <sup>[6]</sup>


[Sibling Death and Traumatic Grief Additional Resources—For Children and Teens](#) <sup>[8]</sup> (2010) (PDF)  <sup>[8]</sup>

#### Unconfirmed Death and Childhood Traumatic Grief


An *unconfirmed death* refers to a situation in which the family does not know whether the person has died and has no guarantee that the person will return. Such situations can occur during war, through kidnapping, or during natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes. In such cases, children may continue to hope, imagine, or plan for the person's return, and feel guilty or disloyal during rituals or holidays spent without the missing person. The uncertainty of the death can be confusing and can mean that traditional and potentially comforting rituals, such as a funeral, cannot take place. Unconfirmed death can also lead to traumatic grief reactions in children.

**Coping with Unconfirmed Death: Tips for Caregivers of Children and Teens** <sup>[9]</sup> (2009) (PDF)  <sup>[2]</sup>

Unconfirmed death can be traumatic for children and teens, in part because the uncertainty about the death makes it difficult for them to complete many of the tasks of normal bereavement. This publication offers caregivers advice on helping children deal with the complex emotions that arise when the death of family member or other meaningful person in a child's life is suspected, but unconfirmed.

**Growing Up with Traumatic Grief** <sup>[10]</sup>  <sup>[10]</sup>

In this webinar, speakers address child traumatic grief and loss through the experience of a young woman whose parent died in a tragic accident. Presenters provide a knowledge base for individuals in systems that serve children, adolescents, and their families who have experienced traumatic grief, including parents, teachers, child welfare workers, resource parents, caregivers, and mental health providers.

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