

# LIFT

*Grief is a process, not a state. –Anne Grant*

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March 2023  
Bereavement Newsletter

Living Is For Today  
West Texas Rehab's Hospice of San Angelo

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**Grief Education Support Group**

Tuesday, March 7, 5:30 pm

WTRC/HOSA Bates Bereavement Center  
1933 University Avenue

**Monthly Luncheon**

Tuesday, March 21, 11:00 am

WTRC/HOSA IDT Room  
1933 University Avenue

**Building Bridges:**

**A Support Group for Grieving Children and Their Families**

Tuesdays, March 21 – April 25, 7-8:00 pm

WTRC/HOSA Bates Bereavement Center

**Building Bridges** is West Texas Rehab Center's Hospice of San Angelo's grief support program specifically designed for children and teens who have experienced loss through the death of someone significant in their lives. Trained volunteers offer support through the use of activities including art, music and other creative means to encourage children to express their feelings of grief and allow them to share cherished memories of their loved ones. Working together in peer groups helps children and teens start the journey toward grief resolution. Building Bridges is offered twice annually during each school year. During each session, groups meet for one hour on Tuesday nights for six weeks.

Volunteers are the cornerstone of the Building Bridges program. Training is offered to teach grief theory, developmental aspects of loss, the art of listening and techniques for facilitating small groups. If you have a special love for children and a desire to help a child's grieving heart, we encourage you to consider becoming a Building Bridges volunteer. For more information about the Building Bridges program and/or becoming a volunteer, please contact the Building Bridges Coordinator Libby Probandt at (325) 658-6524 or [lprobandt@wtrc.com](mailto:lprobandt@wtrc.com).

## GRIEF AND CHILDREN

By American Academy of Child & Adolescent psychiatry

Accessed at [aacap.org](http://aacap.org)

When a family member dies, children react differently than adults. Preschool children usually see death as temporary and reversible, a belief reinforced by cartoon characters that die and come to life again. Children between five and nine begin to think more like adults about death, yet they still believe it will never happen to them or anyone they know.

Adding to a child's shock and confusion at the death of a brother, sister, or parent is the unavailability of other family members, who may be so shaken by grief that they are not able to cope with the normal responsibility of childcare.

Parents should be aware of normal childhood responses to a death in the family, as well as signs when a child is having difficulty coping with grief. It is normal during the weeks following the death for some children to feel immediate grief or persist in the belief that the family member is still alive. However, long-term denial of the death or avoidance of grief can be emotionally unhealthy and can later lead to more severe problems.

A child who is frightened about attending a funeral should not be forced to go, but a plan to honor or remember the person in some way – such as lighting a candle, saying a prayer, making a scrapbook, reviewing photographs, or telling a story – may be helpful to your child's grief process. Children should be allowed to express feelings about their loss and grief in their own way.

Once children accept the death, they are likely to display their feelings of sadness on and off over a long period time, especially around special times such as birthdays and holidays, but also at unexpected moments. The surviving relatives should spend as much time as possible with the child, making it clear that the child has permission to show his or her feelings openly or freely.

The person who has died was essential to the stability of the child's world, and anger is a natural reaction. The anger may be revealed in boisterous play, nightmares, irritability, or a variety of other behaviors. Often the child will show anger towards the surviving family members.

After a parent dies, many children will act younger than they are. The child may temporarily become more infantile, need attention and cuddling, make unreasonable demands for food, baby talk, and even start wetting their beds at night. Younger children frequently believe they are the cause of what happens around them. A young child may believe a parent, grandparent, brother, or sister died because he or she had once wished the person dead when they were angry. The child blames him or herself because the wish came true.

Children who are having serious problems with grief and loss may show one or more of these signs:

- An extended period of depression, in which the child loses interest in daily activities and events,
- Inability to sleep, loss of appetite, prolonged fear of being alone,
- Acting much younger for an extended period,
- Excessively imitating the dead person,
- Believing they are talking to or seeing the deceased family member for an extended period of time,
- Repeated statements of wanting to join the dead person,
- Withdrawal from friends, or
- Sharp drop in school performance or refusal to attend school.

If these signs persist, professional help may be needed. Please contact Building Bridges Coordinator Libby Probandt with any questions and for further information, 325-658-6524, [lprobandt@wtrc.com](mailto:lprobandt@wtrc.com).

**March 2023**



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