

THE GRIEF BRIEF

Back to School Issue

Emma's Place

Staten Island Grief Center for
Children and Families

Support ~ Community ~ Hope

We're Going Back To School



As we notice the days get shorter, see summer clothes go on sale, and spy the first leaf fall to the ground, our attention turns away from summer and towards our children starting a new school year. For some children this can be a time of excited anticipation as they think about re-connecting with friends, and playing on school sports teams again, but for children who lost a loved one, facing a new school year can trigger feelings of fear, anxiety, and sadness. Also, the prospect of starting a new school year as a single parent for the first time can also be extremely stressful for a parent who is grieving the loss of their spouse. It is important that teachers and parents work together to address the needs of a bereaved child, and the school does what it can to support a grieving family. Below are some things parents and teachers can be aware of to help.

- Some children who recently lost a parent may have gotten used to being with the remaining parent for much of the day during the summer. When children separate from their parent to go to school they may become fearful that something might happen to their parent while they are gone. They may regress and become clingy, and believe that they must watch their parent and be by their side to make sure the parent is ok. It is important for the parent to remind the child that being separated from each other does not cause anything bad to happen. Parents can leave notes or pictures in their child's backpack or lunchbox to help them feel connected during the day. Teachers should be mindful that the transition to school may be hard for a grieving child and if the child is having difficulty, encourage the child to put a name to what they are feeling, support the child in the feeling. Teachers should also refer a child who is having prolonged difficulty to a school counselor.
- Feelings of loss may be triggered as children get used to new routines where the loss of a loved one may be more pronounced. For example, if a child's father always helped him with his math homework, and the father has died, the child may become upset each time they do their math homework. Children are not old enough to make this connection and verbalize how they are feeling so it is important for parents to think about prior routines and what may trigger their child. In times like this a parent can name the feeling for the child and say something like, "I know you must miss Dad a lot, especially when you have to do your math homework and he was so great at helping you. Maybe we can find a special way to honor Dad while you are doing your homework." Then come up with something together. Teachers can be careful not to give assignments where one parent or family member is mentioned. For example, don't say, interview your grandmother or grandfather to find out what their favorite games were to play when they were your age. Instead say, interview the oldest person you can find to out what games they liked to play. Teachers also should be aware that children may show signs of distress and act out when first arriving at school or when preparing to leave if the person who they were used to having pick them up and take them to school has died. During these times, it is more helpful to attend to and support the child rather than punish the child.

Many children and families feel isolated during times of grief, and the school can be a great resource of helping the bereaved feel more connected and supported during this hard time, and the new school year help foster healing rather than create stress if we all work together.

September, 2017
Volume 3, Issue 3

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At Emma's Place you will

- Be supported by those who have journeyed through their own path of grief.
- Find a community of welcoming, caring and committed individuals who will listen.
- Learn healthy grief processing in a private, safe-setting which facilitates healing while offering the hope and tools to move forward to a meaningful life.

"What is to give light must endure burning."
-Victor Frankl

Emma's Place
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Support ~ Community ~ Hope



We rely on you.

Our Center is supported through donations, grants, memorials and bequests; which will allow us to provide these services at no cost to the children and families it serves. There are a variety of ways to support Emma's Place and to help reach grieving children and families. We are currently looking for a permanent, cozy home for Emma's Place. Anyone with knowledge of a safe, house or building for rent or as a donation would be greatly appreciated.

Donations can be made out directly to Staten Island Grief Center and mailed to Emma's Place, 276 Watchogue Road Staten Island, NY 10314. Emma's Place staff members are available to make presentations or talk further on the phone – please contact us at 347-850-2322 or info@emmasplacesi.org

We greatly appreciate your generosity!

Emma's Place Schedule

CHILDREN'S GROUPS

1st & 3rd Tuesdays

Ages 4-9	4:00 pm
Ages 10-14	5:00 pm
Ages 15-19	6:30 pm

ADULT GROUPS

1st & 3rd Thursdays

7:00 pm

Read more about Emma's Place at: [Staten Island Live Column](#) or see our Facebook Page!

SELF-CARE WHILE GRIEVING: *By Dr. Adrienne McLeod*

Grieving a loss is mostly thought of as an emotional process, but there is a physical component to grief as well. Trouble falling and/or staying asleep, bodily discomfort, and poor appetite are just a few of the physical symptoms that can take a toll on your health when you are grieving.

To help deal with the sleep issues that often accompany grief, it is helpful to do things that can help you unwind before going to sleep. Some find it relaxing to utilize a diffuser with lavender oil in their bedroom. Lavender is known to calm the nervous system. Just check with a health care professional to ensure that it is OK for you to use this oil, and also ask if there are any supplements you can take that may help alleviate your sleep concerns. Also, avoid looking at your phone or tablet before going to sleep as the light emitted from the screen has been shown to stimulate the body to stay awake.

Body work such as chiropractic, acupuncture and massage therapies can help alleviate the physical aching and soreness that often manifest while you are grieving. As an added bonus, these treatments help with rebalancing your mind and body to prepare for sleep. Body work can also be helpful in supporting your immune system which can also be compromised during the prolonged stress of grieving. You may also want to try an Epsom salt bath to help deal with body and sleep issues. This type of bath provides magnesium which can calm the nervous system and alleviate muscle soreness.

Loss of or decreased appetite is another symptom to be conscious of. Often while you are grieving, well-meaning family and friends visit and bring pastries and cakes. Sometimes it is more tempting to eat during such visits than while you are facing a meal alone, or after being cajoled by a visitor to "treat yourself". Be aware though that the sugar highs and lows from the simple carbs contained in those pastries can intensify the fatigue and exhaustion that comes with grieving. Try to eat small nutritious meals throughout the day, and keep some cut up fruit and vegetables available during such visits so you can readily munch on those rather than a cookie or piece of cake.

When you lose someone, you feel as your world has come to a halt; your energy is depleted and it is very hard to motivate yourself to do the simplest task. It's especially difficult to think about caring for yourself when the person you love is no longer with you. Self-care is an important component of the grieving process, and taking little steps and making incremental changes is the way to go. Even if all you can do for today is take a warm shower, do that. Everyone grieves in their own way, one hour, one day at a time.

Emma's Place 2017 Inaugural Grief Conference

Please join us for Emma's Place 2017 Inaugural Grief Conference for Area Professionals Friday, October 20, 2017 – 9:00 am – 3:00 pm Hosted by: Parent to Parent NY, Inc.

The Institute for Basic Research – 1050 Forest Hill Road, Staten Is. NY, 10314

Early Registration Until September 15th \$59.00

Please click [HERE](#) for all the details and to register or visit

www.emmasplacesi.com and click on the October Grief 2017 Conference.