

Mother's Day and Father's Day

Grief is difficult on any day, but some days are harder than others, no matter how long it has been since the person died. Mother's Day or Father's Day can be extra hard when a child or youth is grieving a parent, step-parent, or other important caregiver.

Grief brings some of the biggest feelings, questions, and changes anyone ever faces. The death of someone important can cause a child or youth to feel like life has changed completely.

Grief can affect the mind, body, emotions, behaviour, relationships, identity, beliefs, and how a child sees the world. It can feel overwhelming and out of control.

Grief can change from moment to moment and over time, but many children say that it is always with them.



Plan ahead

These days may be difficult, but they can also be a time to remember, to spend time with family, to share memories and feelings, and to support each another. There is no "wrong" way to spend these days. Planning ahead allows a child to think about and choose an activity they will feel most comfortable with and can help ease some of the stress. Here are some options you might consider together:

Different Needs

It's okay if it feels too hard for the child or youth to do something special on Mother's or Father's Day. It doesn't mean they don't care or miss the person who died. They can remember and grieve at other times, perhaps on a day that feels less intense.



On the day, your family may find they want or need something different than planned. That's okay too. Do what feels best for your family in that moment. Talk about ways to meet different needs. Maybe there are some things that everyone could do, but other things that each person could choose whether or not to take part.

"Everybody still has a mom to make stuff for"

What are children Grieving ?

- ➔ They may grieve and miss the person, while everyone else is spending time with their living parents.
- ➔ Messages about "happy" Mother's or Father's Day may feel isolating.
- ➔ They may wonder how to spend the day.
- ➔ They may feel that others see or treat them differently.

"It's hard to see other kids doing stuff with their dads. I wish mine was here to do that stuff with me"

What may help ?

While these strategies won't lessen grief, they provide practical ways to support grieving children and youth by being present, listening, respecting choices, and assuring them that they are not alone.

Here are some options you might consider:

Familiar traditions

If they used to eat pizza and cake with the person, they might still enjoy doing that, and thinking or talking about the person while eating.

Something old and something new

You might try a new location for a favourite activity, for example, eating pizza and cake in a park, instead of at home, where the person's place at the table is empty.

Create New Traditions

Try something that was special to the person who died, like going to a special place, eating their favourite meal, or listening to music they enjoyed. Or choose a special way to remember, like looking through photos, visiting the cemetery, or calling someone to talk about the person who died.



Strategies at School

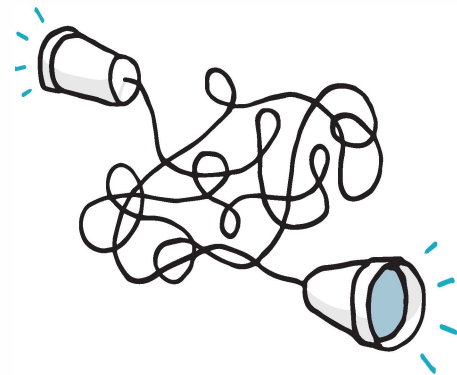
Every child is unique. If there are Mother's Day or Father's Day activities at school, only they know what feels best for them. Talk with teachers in advance about supporting the child, and what choices they can offer. For example, children choose any (or none) of the following:

- ➔ Do the activity and make something for their parent who died.
- ➔ Do the activity but make it for another important person in their life.
- ➔ Do a different activity that they choose.
- ➔ Take a break from the classroom to go to the library or another safe space.



Remember:

Listen, listen, listen to what the child is and isn't comfortable with.



Teachers can help

Talk with teachers in advance about supporting the child. Teachers can help by finding a quiet moment with the child to discuss and plan the following:

- ➔ How the child wants to spend their time during the activities in class.
- ➔ If they want to share anything with their peers about their parent or their parent's death, and what they want to keep private.
- ➔ A grief plan listing things the young person can do (look at pictures, read a book) or places they can go (washroom, library) when big feelings come up.
- ➔ A signal (an item placed on their desk) to let the teacher know that they need to take a break or do something else.