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**BIBLIOTHERAPY FOR BEREAVED YOUTH:
USING LITERATURE TO PROCESS GRIEF AND EXPLAIN LOSS**

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USING LITERATURE TO PROCESS GRIEF AND EXPLAIN LOSS**

by

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**BIBLIOTHERAPY FOR BEREAVED YOUTH:
USING LITERATURE TO PROCESS GRIEF AND UNDERSTAND LOSS**

by

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“The use of books created under the guidance of a subject expert to address a therapeutic need or boost wellness in any active or passive way,” also known as bibliotherapy, can be used in public libraries to encourage general wellbeing and health. One of the largest detriments to childhood health in the United States is childhood loss – 1 in 12 children will lose a parent or sibling by the age of eighteen. By applying developmental bibliotherapy practice to young people who have experienced loss, their loss can be better supported and processed by the young person. This paper will discuss potential ways to integrate bibliotherapy into youth programming at public libraries, and how to include both children and families in that process. This paper also includes a list of books, divided by age group and type, to help youth and families with bereavement and loss.

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INTRODUCTION

Bibliotherapy, first coined as a term in 1916¹ and defined as “the use of books from a list created under the guidance of a subject expert to address a therapeutic need or boost wellness in any active or passive way,”² has been conducted throughout history. In the last century, bibliotherapy has been defined and theorized into categories and implementations that address different situations. Clinical bibliotherapy, defined as “a mode of intervention in aiding persons severely troubled with emotional or behavioral problems” by Lack in *Bibliotherapy with Young People*,³ applies books and other library materials to other traditional therapy methods such as cognitive behavioral therapy. Clinical bibliotherapy, as it ties to traditional therapy, is conducted by either a mental health professional or a librarian in collaboration with a mental health professional. Developmental bibliotherapy, defined as “guided reading of traditional literary works such as fiction, poetry, or drama” in *The Librarian’s Guide to Bibliotherapy*,⁴ is a more gradual and low-stakes version of bibliotherapy that tackles less-serious issues that are developmentally normative. Developmental bibliotherapy can be conducted by a librarian without guidance from a mental health professional, but a mental health professional may also be involved. Both types of bibliotherapy are helpful, but clinical bibliotherapy is often more intense and involves diagnosable mental health conditions, while developmental bibliotherapy is used to address almost any concern that individuals have in their daily lives.

Bibliotherapy has been conducted since 1813 in the United States of America,⁵ and although it has changed in form and placement, it has become a staple in library practice across

¹ Crothers, “A Literary Clinic.”

² Ward and Allred, *The Librarian’s Guide to Bibliotherapy*.

³ Doll and Doll, *Bibliotherapy with Young People*.

⁴ Ward and Allred, *The Librarian’s Guide to Bibliotherapy*.

⁵ Ward and Allred.

the world. In *A Literary Clinic*, the main character had four aspects to their selection policy for literary prescriptions: 1) a basis intended to cure, 2) an adjuvant, to assist and speed up the cure, 3) a corrective, to lessen any undesirable effect, and 4) a vehicle to make it suitable for administration and pleasant for patients.⁶ What Crothers describes, while in different terms, is essentially a fictional work that is facilitated by librarians and is pleasant for the reader – the basis and vehicle are within the book, while an adjuvant and corrective come through the librarian or book group that surrounds the bibliotherapy. William Menninger conducted one of the first research projects on bibliotherapy and identified three factors as the basis for prescribing materials – 1) the patient’s current therapeutic needs, 2) the patient’s background, and 3) the patient’s actual symptoms.⁷ Combining these with Crothers’ aspects of a prescribed book, we achieve the basis of modern bibliotherapy. While librarians today also consider factors such as reading level, situational appropriateness, reader preference, trigger warnings, and more, Menninger and Crothers show us that bibliotherapy has always been about helping people, from its very inception. In 1959, Alice Bryan encouraged the collaboration and cooperation between doctors and librarians to help address both physical and psychological complaints.⁸ As time has moved on, bibliotherapy has become less of a practice in physician’s offices, but can still be conducted in libraries, and is conducted as parts of public libraries around the world.

Bibliotherapy is very flexible in both the way it can be conducted and the ways it can be beneficial for library patrons. Brewster notes that it can be used as a precursor to other types of therapy, as an adjunct to other more traditional types of therapy or medications, and can be used as a follow-up after treatments⁹ – and those are just applications for clinical bibliotherapy! The

⁶ Crothers, “A Literary Clinic.”

⁷ Ward and Allred, *The Librarian’s Guide to Bibliotherapy*.

⁸ Ward and Allred.

⁹ Brewster, “Bibliotherapy: A Critical History.”

United Kingdom (UK) utilizes bibliotherapy in many (97%) of their public libraries, using a program known as Reading Well Books on Prescription.¹⁰ Reading Well Books on Prescription publishes a yearly mood-boosting books list,¹¹ many of which are chosen by individual readers or young people that work within the scheme to help others. Brewster also notes that bibliotherapy was most effective when undertaken on the patron's own volition, meaning that they were the ones to seek out the therapeutic intervention.¹² This is important to note when considering how librarians may want to integrate bibliotherapy into their libraries, especially when it comes to working with young people or families.

Librarians are often already conducting bibliotherapy-type work within their libraries, which Brewster coins as “accidental bibliotherapists.”¹³ These librarians can hone their bibliotherapy-informed work to create programs, research guides, and other resources for patrons who would like book recommendations and programs tailored to their current needs, life situations, and goals. *The Librarian's Guide to Bibliotherapy*, published by the American Library Association as a guide for more intentional bibliotherapy practices, has some great suggestions on how to go about this as a general librarian.¹⁴ Bibliotherapy-informed practices, ideas, and general ideas can be incorporated into traditional, already occurring library programming and functions, such as book clubs or story times. Bibliotherapy can also be incorporated through new programming or additions to current programs. Many libraries may also incorporate bibliotherapy on an individual basis through in person readers' advisory activities and passive programs dedicated to readers' advisory, such as research guides and blog posts.

¹⁰ Brewster.

¹¹ Reading Well, “Mood-Boosting Books.”

¹² Brewster, “Bibliotherapy: A Critical History.”

¹³ Ward and Allred, *The Librarian's Guide to Bibliotherapy*.

¹⁴ Ward and Allred.

Patrons in libraries have a wide variety of needs and goals, and these will vary by community. While a community may have a large need for nonfiction books about rock climbing, these will likely not be beneficial for bibliotherapy. Books and materials that have a diverse range of experiences, topics, and structures can all be beneficial to bibliotherapeutic needs. Fiction books can be helpful for developmental bibliotherapy because they provide distance between the reader and the events in the story that may be close to their own experience. Adult fiction books cover a range of experiences such as divorce, death, university, and more. Adult nonfiction includes memoirs and other types of nonfiction books discussing the same topics, but also includes self-help books covering specific issues such as depression, parental loss, grief, and other experiences, illnesses, and issues. Young adult novels and children's books may cover some of these topics, but in different ways, and potentially not as in-depth as adult materials. Materials will depend on the patron's age, reading level, experience, and more, which is why it is important for librarians to understand all types of their patrons and their circumstances. Children and youth in libraries may have needs addressed by adult materials, but they will not be able to understand the adult materials, and therefore need specific guidance when it comes to libraries and bibliotherapy. Adult materials may also be too intense or painful for young people, and as a recommending librarian, it is important for the bibliotherapist to keep in mind what might be best when it comes to the young reader's situation, needs, and desires.

When it comes to young people in libraries, their needs are as diverse as adults', but often more acute and age specific. Young people that come into libraries may be there with guardians, alone, or with friends. They may be seeking fiction, resources for school projects, or recreational nonfiction. Young library patrons come in all reading levels, socioeconomic strata, ability, race, and life experience. Developmental bibliotherapy can help these young people with a variety of

their developmentally normal problems, as well as non-normative problems that they may be dealing with. Fictional depictions of various life issues, such as grief, illness, or relationship issues, can provide patrons with catharsis and potential solutions for their own situations. In the most basic situations, developmental bibliotherapy can provide youth with the knowledge that they are not alone in their experiences through identification and projection, catharsis, and integration, which can help readers to express intense emotions through the characters, solve personal problems, and apply solutions to themselves in novel ways.¹⁵ Often, these steps are already occurring when individuals read books that relate to them or their situation, but with the guidance of a librarian, the integration and problem-solving aspects can become more apparent, and can directly benefit the patron, as opposed to the general catharsis and moving on that one might experience when reading a book, poem, or play.

While both clinical and developmental bibliotherapy can be incredibly beneficial for several situations, developmental bibliotherapy is arguably the more accessible form of bibliotherapy for librarians already in the field. Not only is it more accessible to learn how to conduct and implement on a library-wide basis, but it may be easier to implement, as library providers are not working with serious mental health concerns and do not need to be deeply informed on psychological science to conduct developmental bibliotherapy. Developmental bibliotherapy as a practice also covers a wider range of concerns, and therefore can be integrated into more aspects, areas, and programs within a library. As it is more accessible and a wider form of bibliotherapy, this report will focus on how librarians can integrate developmental bibliotherapy information and practices into their libraries and programming, particularly in dealing with young people, ages 0-18, dealing with parental illness, loss, and grief.

¹⁵ McNicol, "Theories of Bibliotherapy."

PARENTAL ILLNESS AND LOSS FOR YOUTH

Parental loss is more common than one might think, and the numbers have changed as our society has experienced various world events and pandemics. According to the Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model, one in twelve children will lose a parent or sibling by the age of eighteen.¹⁶ “Death of a parent, sibling, or other important person in a child’s life is one of the most frequently reported disruptive childhood experiences.”¹⁷ In a 2017 survey, the New York Life Foundation found that nearly 80% of adults surveyed who lost a parent before the age of eighteen agreed that “losing a parent was the hardest thing they ever had to face.”¹⁸ Almost a third (32.1%) of parental loss is accidental, while another 23.2% is caused by chronic illness, such as cancer and heart disease.¹⁹ Nearly half of bereaved young people (47%) will grieve a non-illness related death,²⁰ such as those caused by accident, homicide, or suicide. With almost half of bereaved young people experiencing an unexpected death, many bereaved young people will not be prepared to lose the family member that dies. Even young people that are prepared to lose their family member may have trouble processing the actual loss – even with preparation, the actual loss can feel blindsiding or incredibly painful. Those grieving a “less common cause” such as blood cancers or Parkinson’s disease may feel more isolated and misunderstood.²¹ Each young person who loses someone will experience their grief in a unique way, so while these statistics exist, it is important to consider how a child is actively experiencing the loss.

When a young person loses an important adult in their life, such as a parent, they often find support in family and friends. Unfortunately, the New York Life Foundation found that over

¹⁶ “CBEM by Pandemic Impact.”

¹⁷ “CBEM by Pandemic Impact.”

¹⁸ New York Life Foundation, “New York Life Foundation Bereavement Survey.”

¹⁹ JAG Foundation, “CBEM Leading Cause of Death Report.”

²⁰ JAG Foundation.

²¹ JAG Foundation.

half (57%) of adults reported that after their loss, support from family and friends tapered off within the first three months – while the average time to move forward following the loss was over six years.²² When asked if or when they got over it, the most common response from adults surveyed was “I’ve never been okay with my loss.”²³ According to Children’s Grief Awareness Day, the earlier in life a young person loses a parent, the stronger and more profound the impact will be.²⁴ The death of a parent has a profound impact on children and youth that follows them through their formative years and into adulthood, often changing the way they live completely.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that by age fifteen, 5.7% of children lost their mother and 10.3% of children lost their father.²⁵ By the age of thirty, these numbers increase to 17.2% loss for mothers and 29.0% loss for fathers.²⁶ Likely, some of these percentages overlap, but they account for about a third of children losing at least one parent during their childhood and young adult years. COVID-19 also likely impacted these numbers, with Imperial College London estimating that 222,500 children have lost one or both of their parents due to COVID associated deaths in the U.S. alone.²⁷ Unexpected deaths and those caused by illness may feel like they are becoming more common, particularly with the uptick in depression and mental health issues that many states saw due to the isolation of the COVID-19 quarantine. According to the Trust for America’s Health, death rates due to drug use and alcohol increased, and while the suicide rate generally trended downwards, this was not true for many minority communities.²⁸ These deaths disproportionately affected young people (0-34 years of age) and people of color.²⁹ It is

²² New York Life Foundation, “New York Life Foundation Bereavement Survey.”

²³ New York Life Foundation.

²⁴ Children’s Grief Awareness Day, “Children’s Grief Awareness Day.”

²⁵ US Census Bureau, “Losing Our Parents.”

²⁶ US Census Bureau.

²⁷ US Census Bureau.

²⁸ Faberman and Shields, “U.S. Experienced Highest Ever Combined Rates of Deaths Due to Alcohol, Drugs, and Suicide During the COVID-19 Pandemic.”

²⁹ Faberman and Shields.

important for librarians to keep in mind world and community events when it comes to grief and loss, as each community and interest group may be differently affected by such widespread events. The CDC also reports that many middle-aged people are experiencing the effects of Long COVID,³⁰ which affects the children of those adults and may in future lead to more youth bereavement due to parental illness or loss.

In a longitudinal study conducted by Lehman et. al, research suggests that sudden loss, whether due to an accident, homicide, suicide, or sudden illness, is initially more difficult for the young person to process and can lead to more long-term problems.³¹ Surviving children and young adults may develop depressive and somatic symptoms and may act out in behavioral ways at school.³² Reports from parents suggest that the death of a parent or sibling is overwhelmingly negative for young people – many children and young adults studied appeared to go through periods of anguish, confusion, and anger.³³ Lehman’s study found that even infants were adversely affected by the death of a parent,³⁴ and that loss is felt throughout their lifetime. Heath found that 92% of teachers, teaching assistants, and school staff surveyed reported that childhood grief is a serious problem in schools,³⁵ and teachers often do not have the training or professional development to help these students. Bibliotherapy, whether through the local library or partnered with schools, may help to address this issue, and help children who are experiencing grief and loss.

³⁰ Adjaye-Gbewonyo et al., “Long COVID in Adults, United States: 2022.”

³¹ Lehman et al., “Long-Term Effects of Sudden Bereavement.”

³² Lehman et al.

³³ Lehman et al.

³⁴ Lehman et al.

³⁵ Heath, “Grief-Themed Literature for Elementary School Children.”

CONCEPTUALIZING AND ADDRESSING GRIEF

We often speak of grief in five stages – denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.³⁶ We tend to think of these stages as happening in a set order, and that once someone has moved on from one stage, they are in the next and will not return to the previous stage. Often, this is not the case, and thinking of grief as something that is followed in a set guideline may do more harm than good in some cases. Worden identifies four tasks of grief that differ from the five stages that we may be used to – accepting the reality of death, facing the emotional pain of grief, adjusting to changes resulting from the death, and remembering and memorializing the deceased.³⁷ Worden specifically discusses the fact that these tasks are not sequential, and that there is not a set endpoint to grief³⁸ - while a person must accept that the person they loved is dead, that is not the end of the grief, and they may have to accept this fact multiple times. Both the five stages of grief and Worden’s tasks of grief are helpful in thinking about grief and how people process their losses. It may be beneficial to explain both to a parent or family and use activities to show that both the stages and tasks can be recursive processes that turn back on themselves multiple times. There is not a set endpoint to grief and sadness, and many of the suggested books at the end of this paper also center on the idea of grief being a returning process that is not ever “over.” There are also many articles defining multiple types of grief, but once a person is in the grieving process, it may not be beneficial to define their grief, and the librarian may choose to focus more on helping them through their bereavement as opposed to finding a definition to the type of grief that a patron is experiencing.

³⁶ Cruse Bereavement Support, “Understanding the Five Stages of Grief.”

³⁷ Worden, “Worden’s Four Tasks of Mourning.”

³⁸ Heath, “Grief-Themed Literature for Elementary School Children.”

Loss and grief are profound at any age, but young people are an especially vulnerable population when it comes to losing their support systems. Often, as young people, our parents seem immortal, and losing one can skew a young person’s entire worldview. If it takes an average of six years to “get over” a loss and support dwindles after an average of three months,³⁹ bereaved children and youth are often facing their losses alone. Librarians, as a common denominator for many community members, can integrate bibliotherapy for their grieving young people and point them towards resources that can help both youth and families in dealing with and accepting their loss. The Dougy Center⁴⁰ has a wide range of resources that librarians can utilize, share, and incorporate into their bibliotherapy practice. Childhood grief may be a common, quiet occurrence, but librarians can incorporate their knowledge of literature and people to increase the resilience of youth who have lost a loved one.

³⁹ New York Life Foundation, “New York Life Foundation Bereavement Survey.”

⁴⁰ Dougy Center, “Supporters of Grievors.”

BIBLIOTHERAPY FOR BEREAVED YOUTH

HOW BIBLIOTHERAPY WORKS

In cases of bereaved children and youth, developmental bibliotherapy is often the best option for librarians to support their young patrons. Bereaved young people may already be going through or experiencing traditional forms of therapy, either on their own or with family. Developmental bibliotherapy, as a wider range of practices that do not involve clinical diagnoses, will likely be best to support these patrons. Families, therapists, or the young patrons themselves may ask for a collaboration to incorporate bibliotherapy into their personal treatment, but it will be more broadly beneficial for a library to incorporate developmental bibliotherapy into their programming, as opposed to the stricter clinical bibliotherapy. Patrons may also come looking for books and materials that mirror or explain their situation, which developmental bibliotherapy fits into more directly.

Very young children, such as infants and toddlers, will likely not be directly benefited by bibliotherapy. The visible benefits of bibliotherapy are not as applicable to young children who cannot understand them. However, very young children can still benefit from specifically chosen books and stories to address their anxieties and experiences. Suvilehto et. al discuss a toddler's (18 months old) request for a specific book to be read to them by their mother.⁴¹ This is not bibliotherapy in the traditional sense, but it is bibliotherapy in the most basic sense – using books to support and help someone through a developmental need. For toddlers, this may be the best use of these recommendations and resources. For older children, actual activities and bibliotherapy can be conducted, but a shared reading and simple discussion can be just as beneficial for toddlers. Librarians can collaborate with parents to find books that address their

⁴¹ Suvilehto, Kerry-Moran, and Aerila, "Supporting Children's Social and Emotional Growth Through Developmental Bibliotherapy."

children's anxieties about death or illness and recommend some shared reading activities and books to help the toddler work through their experiences and feelings. This will not be as aggressive as other forms of bibliotherapy conducted or suggested in this paper, but stories can still be beneficial for very young children – whether to help them deal with emotions or further their understanding of the world.

Developmental bibliotherapy is considered to have three or four steps, which a reader goes through while reading and discussing “assigned” therapeutic material.⁴² Developmental bibliotherapy is conducted with both fiction and nonfiction books, as well as poetry and short stories. Some of the recognized bibliotherapy steps will be less likely when reading nonfiction, although they are possible. Depending on the complexity of bibliotherapy, there are two popular models – classic or complex. Classic developmental bibliotherapy consists of identification, catharsis, and insight.⁴³ Complex developmental bibliotherapy consists of recognition, examination, juxtaposition, and application to self.⁴⁴ According to *The Librarian's Guide to Bibliotherapy*, there is no significant difference between the two models, and the bibliotherapy being conducted needs to focus more on the process rather than on the specific steps.⁴⁵ When conducting developmental bibliotherapy, a librarian may recommend that the patron write down their experiences or annotate their book, have a discussion with someone else reading the book, or even journal about the way the book is making them feel. Often, when experiencing the phases of developmental bibliotherapy, patrons may have revelations about their experiences, or may feel as though they are not alone in their experiences. Fiction novels, poetry, and short

⁴² Ward and Allred, *The Librarian's Guide to Bibliotherapy*.

⁴³ Ward and Allred.

⁴⁴ Ward and Allred.

⁴⁵ Ward and Allred.

stories may have more of these revelatory moments, although they may still occur when using nonfiction.

Identification, the first step of classic bibliotherapy, occurs when a reader sees themselves in the story. McNicol identifies this as an empathetic response.⁴⁶ Catharsis, the second step, occurs when readers experience the same or similar emotions to a character within the work, and address their feelings or express intense emotions through the character.⁴⁷ Insight, the final step, occurs when readers begin to approach their problem on a more intellectual level because of the book that they have read.⁴⁸ A librarian may also want to encourage and integrate some of the expanded steps from complex bibliotherapy as well – a reader going through bibliotherapy with a librarian may benefit greatly from self-application and activities that encourage them to integrate the insight they gained from the therapeutic material into their daily life.⁴⁹ In the case of some communities, shared reading may be the best way to conduct bibliotherapy, as it puts a greater emphasis on the discussion that comes from the material and the dialogue between readers, the material, and their own experiences. Librarians can conduct shared reading either on a one-on-one librarian-to-reader model, or on a peer-support model.⁵⁰

To conduct a bibliotherapy program or incorporate bibliotherapy into their library, librarians also need to go over a wide range of decision points to ensure the efficacy of their interventions. These decisions include, but are not limited to, the timing of a program (whether it be recurring or singular, the length of a recurring program, the length of sessions, the frequency of sessions, and the scheduling of these sessions), the venue, the audience, the reading materials,

⁴⁶ McNicol, "Theories of Bibliotherapy."

⁴⁷ McNicol.

⁴⁸ McNicol.

⁴⁹ McNicol.

⁵⁰ McNicol.

and the moderator(s).⁵¹ Librarians may also want to consider who precisely they will be working with – are they partnering with schools, parents, friends, or the bereaved youth themselves? Each of these areas will require different planning and may require different interventions and information from the lead librarians. A school may want a bibliotherapy guide to provide to their students, guiding introductory activities, discussion groups, and concluding activities.⁵² A parent might want to read a book alongside or with their child and may want guiding questions to help guide a discussion with their child as they read.⁵³ Some books discussing or dealing with grief may provide these questions, while other books may need to have these questions created for them by the librarian or parent (or both). An ill parent may also use books as a way to explain their illness and potential death to a child, and that may also require some guided questions that again, may need to be created by the librarian in order to cover the needs of the patron(s).⁵⁴ Some books, like *Bibliotherapy: When Kids Need Books*, offer a wide range of book suggestions for families and librarians to consider.⁵⁵ Publishers or academics may also put out bibliographies, such as *Special Needs Bibliography*, to address specific areas of need.⁵⁶ In other cases, librarians may need to look through book review lists, specific articles discussing grief literature, or may even need to find the books on their own, whether already in their catalog or outside of it. Although they will still need vetting, blogs like Book Riot⁵⁷ and book recommendation sites like Goodreads⁵⁸ can be helpful in finding new books about grief for children and can be useful for librarians.

⁵¹ Ward and Allred, *The Librarian's Guide to Bibliotherapy*.

⁵² Recob, *Bibliotherapy: When Kids Need Books*.

⁵³ Recob.

⁵⁴ Recob.

⁵⁵ Recob.

⁵⁶ Griffin, *Special Needs Bibliography: Current Books for/about Children and Young Adults Regarding Social Concerns, Emotional Concerns, the Exceptional Child*.

⁵⁷ Book Riot, "BOOK RIOT."

⁵⁸ Goodreads, "Goodreads."

WAYS OF CONDUCTING BIBLIOTHERAPY IN YOUR LIBRARY

Bibliotherapy may be best conducted on an individual or small group scale for bereaved young people, depending on the community circumstances, patron's individual circumstances, and librarian comfort level. Each patron will be experiencing various aspects of parental illness, loss, or grief, and a librarian may find it best to tailor their bibliotherapy practice to the individual. Some individuals, or groups of individuals, may benefit from active bibliotherapy programs tailored to their needs, while other individuals may benefit from individual discussions, readers' advisory, or Research guides. This case-by-case assessment will require patience, practice, resources, and time on the librarian's part, but with any one person and their grief, there is no singular one-size-fits-all solution. Librarians will have some of this practice due to their experience providing readers' advisory and book recommendations, but bibliotherapy can often come to a bit more than matching a reader to their book and vice versa. The librarian must also consider aspects of their collection such as availability, amenities, and reading levels, and needs to consider aspects of their community such as specific demographics, human resources, and the interaction of communities.⁵⁹

In an individual setting, readers' advisory skills will be particularly beneficial for the librarian as they work with the patron to discover the correct book(s) to provide support. With older young people, or young adults, who may be seeking support on their own, the librarian can conduct individual readers' advisory and find what the student may be feeling, interested in, and what they would like to read about. On this one-on-one basis, librarians can find books that fit the young patron's reading level, experience level, and their situation, which may be harder to accomplish in a group setting. Tweens (ages 10-12) and teens (ages 13-18) may not want to work

⁵⁹ Ward and Allred, *The Librarian's Guide to Bibliotherapy*.

with their surviving parents or family to deal with their grief. These age groups may also be seeking escape from their situation through fiction. Individual bibliotherapy and readers' advisory can help the librarian to address this. Depending on the young person and the situation, the librarian may "assign" homework or make a dedicated attempt to discuss the recommendation with the child when they return the book. An individual basis of bibliotherapy may not be as conducive to discussion, but the therapeutic aspect of reading still applies.

Librarians also may work with the surviving parent to provide books to their children, particularly in the case of young children who may still be relying on older adults to read to them. Picture books are helpful for younger children and may even be beneficial for the entire family. In some cases, librarians may also be able to work with families experiencing a parental illness to provide them with at-home story time kits and activities to support the family through the experience. Many public libraries are already providing at-home story time kits, and these might adjust them to include more bibliotherapy-targeted activities, stories, and experiences.

In a small group setting, children may be able to discuss their experiences more openly. Small groups can allow children to express their feelings, hear from others, and feel less alone dealing with grief. Small groups might be hard to convene but can be particularly beneficial for communities or groups experiencing tragedy. A small group may incorporate story time, creative activities, and discussion to allow for patrons to articulate and re-articulate their grief. In the case of COVID-19, a community or group hit especially hard may benefit from a group for their surviving children. It may be beneficial, where possible, to specify age groups or experiences when creating these small groups, but in a small community or a disparate library service area, it may not be feasible to create individual groups for survivors.

Passive programs may also be incredibly beneficial for young patrons who are uncomfortable sharing about their loss, but still want the support that a book can provide. Research guides or online readers' advisory can help youth to ask for supportive books, or find them on their own, without having to share their feelings and experiences aloud to another. These passive programs may be especially helpful for children who have *just* experienced the loss, and who are unsure where to go next. Research guides can include outside resources as well as books and materials that the library has and can recommend in-person activities without the feeling of requirement that an in-person recommendation may carry. Library resource pages can also include resources for parents and guardians who are looking to help their children, but don't know that they can ask a librarian for help. Passive programs can also include posters, such as those from Children's Grief Awareness Day,⁶⁰ and printed lists of books displayed on bookshelves. These types of passive programs can be helpful for all types of problems a young person may experience, but they can be particularly beneficial for the awkward and often stigmatized experience of grief.

A library may find that it's best to use a combination of active and passive programs and incorporate digital resources and experiences into both types of programming. Librarians may also want to teach themselves about bibliotherapy and incorporate it into their everyday practices within the library system and community. As previously stated, there is no one-size-fits-all way to experience, accept, and process grief, but a wide variety of support can make sure that every patron has something from which they can benefit. Librarians may reach out to nearby institutions, individuals, and other libraries to cooperate with each other, and library departments may also collaborate to support bereaved families and youth. With a wide variety of resources,

⁶⁰ Children's Grief Awareness Day, "Children's Grief Awareness Day."

bereaved families and youth can rely on the library to provide a supportive environment for one of the most common disruptions to childhood.⁶¹

CASE STUDIES

Bibliotherapy does not necessarily need to be conducted via the written word – it can also be conducted with narratives that are less traditional in their presentations. McNicol illustrates how graphic narratives (including both graphic novels and comic books) can be used to conduct bibliotherapy.⁶² These are used either in print or digitally and have a history of conveying information in public health education.⁶³ A graphic narrative is not the same as a picture book – it is a “narrative work in the medium of comics.”⁶⁴ Graphic narratives can be particularly appealing for certain audiences, such as tween and teen boys, and can expand literary skills such as visual literacy and interpretation. McNicol notes that due to the nature of graphic narratives needing the reader to create their own interpretations, it is often easier for readers to find resonances within them.⁶⁵ Graphic narratives have unique ways that they can be integrated within bibliotherapy – librarians can integrate them with activities to create the patron’s own graphic narratives. By creating these personal comics depicting aspects of their lives, patrons can experience some of the catharsis and integration more acutely that bibliotherapy can provide. McNicol does identify some challenges of using graphic narratives, including their potentially unfamiliar format, their complexity when reading aloud, their “childish” reputation, and the potential of facilitators being less confident with using graphic narratives in their lives.⁶⁶ McNicol’s findings with graphic

⁶¹ “CBEM by Pandemic Impact.”

⁶² McNicol, “Bibliotherapy and Graphic Narratives.”

⁶³ McNicol.

⁶⁴ Chute and DeKoven, “Introduction: Graphic Narrative.”

⁶⁵ McNicol, “Bibliotherapy and Graphic Narratives.”

⁶⁶ McNicol.

narratives can also expand to other non-text materials, such as films, television shows, or music albums. These varied materials may appeal to a broader audience that is in need of bibliotherapeutic services and may be more approachable for certain patrons. The librarian will need to conduct similar vetting and design for the bibliotherapeutic additions to films, graphic narratives, television shows, or music albums, but they could be used to address the needs of patrons in similar ways to traditional fiction and nonfiction books.

Bibliotherapy can also be conducted without the guidance of a librarian or mental health professional, although this is not recommended. A reader may experience the steps of bibliotherapy (identification, catharsis, and integration) without a librarian taking them through the steps and providing these materials. If or when this occurs, a librarian can be prepared to discuss a book with their young patron. When identification or catharsis occurs, a young patron might be excited to share their revelations with someone, and it may be a parent, a friend, or their librarian. While this is not bibliotherapy in the same way, librarians can be prepared through their bibliotherapy experience to provide further resources, a listening ear, or recommendations for more books or programs. Identification, catharsis, and integration are not experiences that are limited to directed and formal bibliotherapy, and when they happen outside of that space, it can be beneficial for librarians to keep an open mind and open ear for when it occurs.

One of the best ways that a library can promote bibliotherapy to young people in need is to utilize those young people to help promote their programming. Young people who have benefited from bibliotherapy, or those who are a part of a library's Children or Youth Advisory Board (if they have one), can cooperate with the library to create and promote bibliotherapy programs. In 2015, Reading Well Books on Prescription in the UK expanded to "cater to young

people.”⁶⁷ In their expansion of the program, 96% of young people surveyed reported that a book had provided support in dealing with difficult feelings.⁶⁸ The libraries expanding the Reading Well program worked with a youth mental health charity, Young Minds, to gain young people’s insight and co-produce the book list. The young advisors noted five aspects that they found important for libraries incorporating children’s and youth’s bibliotherapy: 1) promotion is essential, 2) books can play an important role in improving mental health, 3) a bibliotherapy scheme could be particularly useful for young men, 4) books can be triggering and these triggers should be addressed, and 5) it is important to include books about the impact of mental health as well as those specifically about mental health.⁶⁹ The young people were encouraged to develop activities for themselves and their peers, and libraries were given a range of ideas and resources to promote and engage young people in the Reading Well scheme. Libraries integrating bibliotherapy into their programming and book suggestions can follow this example to include young people in their planning and promotion in order to encourage the success of their own bibliotherapy efforts. Walworth noted that including young people in the bibliotherapy process and integrating it into a whole school community had multiple positive impacts, including improved awareness and understanding of mental health conditions, improved emotional and mental well-being, including improved hope and lowered feelings of isolation, changes in behavior and relationships, and the normalization of mental health discussions.⁷⁰ Hopefully, by integrating bibliotherapy into a library’s children and youth section, their community can experience similar benefits when addressing the entire served community.

⁶⁷ Walworth, “Engaging Young People in Bibliotherapy and Reading for Wellbeing.”

⁶⁸ Walworth.

⁶⁹ Walworth.

⁷⁰ Walworth.

CONCLUSION

Grief in childhood is a more common occurrence than many of us would like to believe, and it can be an incredibly painful experience that changes individuals for the rest of their lives. With bibliotherapy and these resources, librarians can create safe spaces for bereaved young people and families to work through their grief and mitigate stigma that may come from the loss or illness of a parent. While bibliotherapy may not be the only solution to these issues, books and their impact can be a powerful support when it comes to feeling alone. Librarians incorporating bibliotherapy into their libraries must be prepared for anything, and childhood grief is an unexpected but necessary experience to prepare for. It can be an uncomfortable discussion for librarians, families, and the community, but death is a reality that everyone will face eventually, and being prepared with resources, bibliotherapy-informed practices, and programming, the librarians in our lives can help provide support to those left behind after a death. The library community, especially our young patrons, need support when it comes to grief, and bibliotherapy can provide that – and librarians are the perfect channel with which to give these books to young people in need.

BOOK SUGGESTIONS FOR BEREAVED YOUTH

These book suggestions are divided by book type and a general age group that may benefit from them. These ages are general and guidelines only, as young people and adults may all benefit from a variety of types of books. The age ranges provided are also approximate, as every child develops differently, and what is appropriate for one child may not be appropriate for another, despite their similar age or experience. For books that have more distinct genres, especially those for middle grade and young adult readers, their description will note these distinctions as well as their relevance to bereavement bibliotherapy and grieving youth.

Fiction materials were selected based on how they integrated or explained grief or death, writing style, age appropriateness, story quality, illustration quality (if applicable), and general availability. Nonfiction materials were selected based on how they integrated or explained grief or death, writing style, age appropriateness, usefulness, illustration quality (if applicable), and general availability. When considering materials, other quality materials were discounted due to their stories or illustrations. These are still quality materials but have not been included on this list. Other librarians may find these materials useful for their communities or young patrons. Book reviews were consulted, but recommendations were not solely based on reviews, and not all recommendations have starred reviews. Suggestions were sourced from a variety of blogs, other librarians and libraries, research guides, booklists, and academic journals.

If librarians are looking for material explicitly created by psychologists, the American Psychological Association⁷¹ has a publishing imprint called Magination Press⁷² that produces children's books covering a wide variety of situations. These children's books cover subjects including bullying, depression, friendship, gender and sexuality, health and medical issues, grief,

⁷¹ American Psychological Association, "American Psychological Association (APA)."

⁷² American Psychological Association, "Magination Press Children Books."

social justice, and more. These books are not included in this recommendation list, but they may be incredibly helpful for librarians as they seek to help young people and families through various life events via bibliotherapy.

While there are different categories of recommendations here, the common early reader is not included. Early readers serve the ages of five to eight and are dedicated to help emergent readers learn how to read on their own. These books are full of controlled, phonetically easy vocabulary that new readers can sound out to learn new words. While early readers are incredibly important for young people learning to read, they often do not have in-depth plots, which does not lend itself to the discussion of grief, loss, and bereavement. Due to this lack of in-depth plot in early readers, and the complexity of the topic of childhood grief, early reader books are not included in this recommendation list. They may exist, but they are few and far between. For helping children in this age group, the author recommends using picture books as a family or reading a middle grade fiction book alongside a child.

Please note: The author has chosen to avoid books that focus on a higher power aspect of grief and loss. These can be incredibly helpful books for young people and their families, but it is important to recognize that not every young person and family will handle grief and loss in the same way. Librarians may absolutely provide religious fiction dealing with grief and loss when requested, but it can feel patronizing or uncomfortable for the patron when they are suggested a book that doesn't align with their personal religious beliefs. Librarians must keep this in mind when finding and recommending materials and may want to additionally educate themselves on books that address those aspects of grief.

PICTURE BOOKS (AGES 0-8)

Children this young (ages 0-8) are not able to read books on their own, but that doesn't mean that librarians and families can't use books to help them understand and process loss. Reading to children encourages language development, supports cognitive development, increases the child's concentration and focus, and further develops a parent-child bond.^{73 74} Surviving parents, guardians, or even the ill parent may be able to incorporate these stories into at-home story times, reading sessions, or more to help a child understand and accept a loss. If a parent dies while the child is very young, picture books may help them reconcile the dissonance between their family's structure and their friends'.

While picture books are aimed at young children who cannot read on their own, they can be beneficial for young people of any age. Picture books can allow for youth to visualize their experiences, bring together disparate age groups, and can allow children to bond with their parents, even as older children and teenagers. A picture book may also work as a guide for young people to write their own narratives of grief in a book club or activity and may be considered for any age. Some young people in certain age groups may be opposed to reading picture books, but they can still be suggested and may be a great option for large groups.

Some picture books that may help a young person understand and accept a parent's death include:

- *The Scar* by Charlotte Moundlic, illustrated by Olivier Tallec⁷⁵
 - A long picture book discussing the death of a mother who was terminally ill, *The Scar* follows a young boy going through the stages of grief and finding ways to remember his mom. A great story for a parent or guardian to read to a child, or a good picture book for older children who can read on their own but want the comfort of a short, illustrated story.

⁷³ Children's Bureau, "Benefits & Importance of Reading to Children."

⁷⁴ "Why Is It Important to Read to Your Child?"

⁷⁵ Moundlic, *The Scar*.

- *The Storyteller* by Lindsay Bonilla, illustrated by Noar Lee Naggan⁷⁶
 - *The Storyteller* follows a young boy and his grandmother, who tells him lots of stories. When his grandmother becomes ill, the young boy leans on her stories and his memories of her to find a way to accept and understand her death. The illustrations are also beautiful and show the world through the eyes of a child steeped in story. The book ends with an adult version of the young boy, continuing the stories, which can provide hope to young readers.
- *Ida, Always* by Caron Levis and Charles Santoso⁷⁷
 - Fictionalized from a true story of two polar bears in Central Park, *Ida, Always* covers the illness and loss of a close friend (or family member). The story covers their life before illness, the ways in which the polar bears go through their illness, and life after *Ida's* death. This is a great story for explaining illness and the feeling of grief to a child – and may be especially beneficial for an ill parent.
- *Calling the Wind* by Trudy Ludwig, illustrated by Kathryn Otoshi⁷⁸
 - Set in Japan, this story follows a family who has lost a mother. The children find the wind phone and use it to call their deceased mother, voicing their grief. They also bring home yellow things, representing their memories and connection to their mother. The beautiful watercolor illustrations show various reactions to grief, and show children that it's okay to be emotional, but that there are still ways to feel their lost loved one all around them. The book also includes a photo of the real-life wind phone and some recommended resources on grief.
- *One Wave at a Time* by Holly Thompson, illustrated by Ashley Crowley⁷⁹
 - Explaining grief to children can be incredibly hard. This book uses waves as metaphors and color-codes them so children can better identify them in the illustrations. Alongside the helpful story, there are activities mentioned in the stories that families could apply to themselves, and there are resources included at the end of the book.
- *The Heart and the Bottle* by Oliver Jeffers⁸⁰
 - A story of grief and moving on, *The Heart and the Bottle* shows how grief can affect people throughout their lives, and how sharing grief with others can help people to overcome it. *The Heart and the Bottle* is a great story for a family to read together, to discuss how to prevent their grief from

⁷⁶ Bonilla, *The Storyteller*.

⁷⁷ Levis and Santoso, *Ida, Always*.

⁷⁸ Ludwig and Otoshi, *Calling the Wind*.

⁷⁹ Thompson, *One Wave at a Time: A Story About Grief and Healing*.

⁸⁰ Jeffers, *The Heart and the Bottle*.

trapping their hearts in bottles. While the death isn't explicit in this book, the grief is.

- *Cape* by Kevin Johnson, illustrated by Kitt Thomas⁸¹
 - *Cape* follows a young boy going to his father's funeral. He displays many of the feelings of grief but finds a way to work through them and remember his father and the joy that they shared when he was alive. Fantastically illustrated and told, *Cape* is a great choice for a child who has recently had to go through the process of a funeral and loss.

MIDDLE GRADE FICTION (AGES 9-14)

Middle grade fiction, generally considered for ages 9 to 14, is a mix between elementary chapter books and young adult fiction. While the novels are usually longer, they are usually not as direct about some of the more painful themes that may be present. Middle grade fiction is also tailored toward the age group, and main characters will likely be similar ages to the readers, as well as having similar problems. These books also fill a gap between elementary chapter books and young adult books and overlap both of their age groups, so some patrons may be ready for older novels, while others may still gravitate towards the younger selections. At this point, a patron is reading on their own, and choosing books on their own, although a parent may want to read the book alongside them (but separately) to have discussions.

Some middle grade fiction books that will be beneficial are:

- *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson⁸²
 - This classic story of two young friends who explore a magical land has been a staple in explaining death to young children. While it is not a parent who dies, children can relate to the sudden and painful experience of the main character, Jesse, and can learn about reactions to death through his experiences.
- *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White⁸³

⁸¹ Johnson, *Cape*.

⁸² Paterson, *Bridge to Terabithia*.

⁸³ White, *Charlotte's Web*.

- Another classic story, children can use Wilbur’s loss of Charlotte to discuss their own loss and see how they can continue without their own Charlotte-like figures, whether they be parents, siblings, or friends.
- *The Care and Feeding of a Pet Black Hole* by Michelle Cuevas⁸⁴
 - Addressed to her dead father, *The Care and Feeding of a Pet Black Hole* follows Stella as she accidentally acquires a pet black hole (which represents her grief) and her adventures dealing with it. Written in a very cute way with magical realism and space-faring science tied together wonderfully, this book is a great entrance into grief literature and magical realism for middle grade readers.
- *Like Nothing Amazing Ever Happened* by Emily Blejwas⁸⁵
 - After the death of his dad, Justin feels lost. He isn’t sure what happened the night his dad died, but he knows that he’s gone. And everything is bland – he wishes nothing had ever happened, that life was boring (like they always thought it was before his dad died). It’s speculated that the father committed suicide, but the characters do not know the truth, and it can be interpreted in many ways. While this book is not solely about the death of a parent, it covers the feeling and experience of the aftermath very well.
- *Clues to the Universe* by Christina Li⁸⁶
 - Two young students who have both lost their father (in one way or another) become unlikely friends through their love of space, comic books, and the search to find meaning after a parent is gone. Written from two points of view, *Clues to the Universe* is great for kids missing family, friends, and seeking connection in a cosmos that seems unfair.
- *Many Points of Me* by Caroline Gertler⁸⁷
 - Georgia’s father is a famous artist. That’s how you talk about famous artists – they *are*. So even though her dad has been dead for one year, nine months, and 27 days, he is still an artist. Georgia’s dad’s art surrounds her, but it wasn’t ever for her. She’s jealous of her best friend who feels closer to her dad than she ever was, and is jealous of her mother, who got to be the subject of one of her father’s artworks. Exploring her dad’s things, though, leads to a revelation and reconciling that Georgia does not expect.

⁸⁴ Cuevas, *The Care and Feeding of a Pet Black Hole*.

⁸⁵ Blejwas, *Like Nothing Amazing Ever Happened*.

⁸⁶ Li, *Clues to the Universe*.

⁸⁷ Gertler, *Many Points of Me*.

YOUNG ADULT FICTION (AGES 13-20)

Young adult (YA) fiction covers the widest age range here and may be suitable for readers ages 13 to 20, although many older adults enjoy the YA genre as well. Young adult fiction often handles complex and painful issues more explicitly than fiction for younger children and may even have on-page death or other adult themes. While on-page death may seem triggering, it can also be cathartic for young people going through the bibliotherapy process. Librarians must take care to warn patrons about possibly triggering events in the book and may even create a small “trigger warning” page to include in the catalog. These patrons are choosing books on their own and may not want their parents to know about what they’re reading. The recommending librarian may want to offer to be a listening ear if that’s the case or may suggest a book group if there’s one going on at the library.

Some young adult fiction that may be helpful include:

- *A Monster Calls* by Patrick Ness⁸⁸
 - A staple in explaining grief to children in fictional terms, *A Monster Calls* is a great story for children coping with a parent’s illness or loss. The titular monster, while depicted as a tangible force in the novel, is also a representation of the protagonist’s grief as he comes to terms with losing his mother.
- *Ghost Wood Song* by Erica Waters⁸⁹
 - Shady Grove lost her father, and she is haunted by his ghosts. Her father had magic that could help him talk to the dead, and with him gone, it seems like she’ll never talk to him again. When more people in Shady’s life pass on, it feels like the ghosts around her are all she has left.
- *The Astonishing Color of After* by Emily X.R. Pan⁹⁰
 - After her mother’s suicide, Leigh feels as though the world has shifted forever. But her mother isn’t truly gone – she’s a bird. When strange, magical things start to happen, Leigh goes to Taipei to meet her maternal grandparents and learn more about the family she’s lost. *The Astonishing*

⁸⁸ Ness, *A Monster Calls*.

⁸⁹ Waters, *Ghost Wood Song*.

⁹⁰ Pan, *The Astonishing Color of After*.

Color of After is beautifully written and deals with exploring loss and grief, as well as your own family, in a fantastically colorful magical realism novel.

- *Turtle Under Ice* by Juleah del Rosario⁹¹
 - After the death of their mother, sisters Rowena and Ariana drift apart and find that they are no longer as close as they once were. After one of them disappears, though, the other must find her. A verse novel, *Turtle Under Ice* shows how grief is experienced differently by different people through the lens of sisterhood.
- *Speed of Life* by Carol Weston⁹²
 - Eight months after her mother's death, Sofia's friends are ready for her to get over it. But that isn't how grief works – and Sofia decides to reach out to an advice columnist for help. After spilling her guts to the columnist, Sofia finds out a secret that rocks her world...again. *Speed of Life* isn't only about grief, but it takes a raw and real look at the pain and aftermath that a sudden death can cause.

YOUTH NONFICTION (AGES 0-18)

Although nonfiction for young people can be divided into all the above age categories, for the purposes of these suggestions, they have been grouped together into one. The recommending librarian may use their personal knowledge of their patrons and their development to recommend books and may choose to include more books that discuss the particular subjects that pertain to the young person's situation. The nonfiction books recommended here are very broadly about grief, loss, and self-care for bereaved young people, but may be beneficial for families and parents as well to use as tools for discussion.

Some recommended nonfiction books for bereaved young people are:

- *I Miss You: A First Look at Death* by Pat Thomas and Leslie Harker⁹³
 - A nonfiction picture book explaining how death works, what a funeral looks like, and how missing people is a valid way to react to death.

⁹¹ del Rosario, *Turtle Under Ice*.

⁹² Weston, *Speed of Life*.

⁹³ Thomas and Harker, *I Miss You: A First Look at Death*.

Written by a psychotherapist, *I Miss You* is simple but direct, and has moments for a pair or group of readers to pause and discuss included questions.

- *Death Is Stupid* by Anastasia Higgenbotham⁹⁴
 - A nonfiction picture book describing the realities of death, how it can be confusing and seem stupid to some. With unique collage-style illustrations, *Death is Stupid* covers the simple facts of death and talks about how everyone's reactions are their own.
- *Life is Like the Wind* by Shona Innes, illustrated by Írisz Agócs⁹⁵
 - This simple nonfiction picture book discusses how life is something that we can't see, but we can feel – and we can also tell when it's gone. It discusses how some people conceptualize losing life, and how we can still remember it even if it is gone.
- *What Happens When We Die?* by J.R. Becker, illustrated by Max Rambaldi⁹⁶
 - This book is a part of a larger series, which uses many lenses to explore various scientific histories. Annabelle and Aiden, the main characters, explore death and afterlives, and a child's perspective on it. The characters are very cute and helpful, and the writing is easy to follow. It takes a scientific view on the process of death, but doesn't discount the potential of afterlives, which can be useful for all types of families.
- *We Need to Talk About Death* by Sarah Chavez, illustrated by Annika Le Large⁹⁷
 - An illustrated, but older look at death and its conventions around the world, this nonfiction book is a good starting place for an elementary school or middle-grade reader to understand the complexities of death and our understanding of it. Chavez discusses afterlife beliefs, how bodies are taken care of after death, how bodies decompose, and grief. The illustrations are simple but incredibly useful, and it's formatted in a way that is easy to follow for younger readers.
- *After Life: Ways We Think About Death* by Merrie-Ellen Wilcox⁹⁸
 - For middle-grade and young adult readers, this book is a more in-depth look at how grief and death work. It discusses ideas of afterlives, how decomposition works, and more, in a very in-depth and direct way. The formatting may be a bit confusing for younger readers, but those in middle grades and young adult reading levels will be able to follow the wide array of information provided.

⁹⁴ Higgenbotham, *Death Is Stupid*.

⁹⁵ Innes, *Life Is Like the Wind*.

⁹⁶ Becker, *What Happens When We Die?*

⁹⁷ Chavez, *We Need to Talk About Death*.

⁹⁸ Wilcox, *After Life: Ways We Think About Death*.

- *Grief: Insights and Tips for Teenagers* by Joe Jansen⁹⁹
 - Created specifically for teenagers, and with teens who have experienced loss, this nonfiction book helps teens go through the process of grief. It begins with a section telling the reader that they are not alone and gives a definition of grief that the book works from for the rest of the work. It also uses pop culture examples to highlight grief and create comparisons, which can be helpful for teenagers whose knowledge may focus mostly on the popular culture of our world as opposed to individual experiences.
- *The Grieving Teen: A Guide for Teenagers and Their Friends* by Helen Fitzgerald¹⁰⁰
 - Written as a guidebook in sections, this handbook answers many questions teenagers may have surrounding death – am I also going to die? Should I tell my teachers? – and has a section written by teens. It also has a section written for teens who may have friends who have lost someone, which can be incredibly helpful for those who want to help but aren’t sure how to do so.

FOR PARENTS AND/OR GUARDIANS

Some books may be more beneficial for the parents, guardians, or adults of bereaved young people. Helping a child or young adult with grief is often a new experience for the adults as well as the young person, and it can be incredibly helpful to use books that address this to educate themselves and find ways to discuss death with their newly grieving children.

Some books that can help educate parents and/or guardians on how to help a young person through grief include:

- *A Parent’s Guide to Managing Childhood Grief* by Katie Lear, LCMHC, RPT, RDT¹⁰¹
 - Written by a licensed counselor, this book covers the basics of childhood grief and how children grieve differently than adults. The rest of the book then goes on to discuss activities for various aspects of grief that parents and their children can do together to understand and accept the loss, work through big emotions, or memorialize the dead person.

⁹⁹ Jansen, *Grief: Insights and Tips for Teenagers*.

¹⁰⁰ Fitzgerald, *The Grieving Teen: A Guide for Teenagers and Their Friends*.

¹⁰¹ Lear, *A Parent’s Guide to Managing Childhood Grief: 100 Activities for Coping, Comforting, & Overcoming Sadness, Fear, & Loss*.

- *Grief and Loss: Your Questions Answered* by Louis Kuykendall Jr.¹⁰²
 - Appropriate for both teens and parents, this book offers concise answers for some basic questions about grief and its process. It may be helpful to inform parents before they answer their children’s questions and can be helpful to provide to teenagers as well to allow them to answer their own questions.
- *Helping Bereaved Children: A Handbook for Practitioners* edited by Nancy Boyd Webb¹⁰³
 - While this book is geared towards counselors and therapists, it can be beneficial for parents as well. Some notable sections of this book include ‘The Child and Death,’ ‘Distinguishing between “Normal” and “Disabling” Grief,’ and ‘Counseling/Therapy Options.’ Not only does this book provide a general guide on how children can understand death, but it helps a parent recognize when a child’s grief is more than “normal” and can help find them intervention.
- *The Companioning the Grieving Child Curriculum Book* by Patricia Morrissey, M.S. E.D.¹⁰⁴
 - This book fills a need for information when it comes to helping children deal with grief. The book is full of activities divided by age group and need. Their needs include acknowledging the reality of the death, embracing the pain of loss, remembering the person who died, developing a new self-identity, searching for purpose and meaning, and receiving continued adult support. Supportive adults in the child’s life can use these activities to inform themselves about their children’s needs and meet them, which can bring them closer after the loss of a family member.

¹⁰² Kuykendall, *Grief and Loss*.

¹⁰³ Webb, *Helping Bereaved Children: A Handbook for Practitioners*.

¹⁰⁴ Morrissey, *The Companioning the Grieving Child Curriculum Book: Activities to Help Children & Teens Heal*.

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