

... "bite size" news from your HSB Regional Healthy Social Behaviors Coaches



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# OH, Behave!



## Tip of the Month:

It is important that all the adults in a child's life use the same terms when talking about death. Avoid using the words "passed away", "resting", or "taken from us".

## Connect with us!

Check out [Tucker's NC Nest](#) on Pinterest!

Follow OhBehaveTips on [X \(formerly, Twitter!\)](#)

Join our new online community by clicking [here](#)! By joining Social - Emotional Connections, you will have the opportunity to network, post questions, and share resources with other early childhood professionals in NC!

Open our latest public resource, a growing library shelf of virtual binders that include archived issues of the HSB newsletter, *OH, Behave!*, a collection of Disaster Response Resources, and a binder of scripted stories for classroom use! Click [here](#).

## Helping Children Cope with a Loss

Knowing how to support young children when they lose someone can be difficult. The loss of a familiar person such as a teacher or classmate might be even trickier to navigate because multiple children might be experiencing grief at the same time and it will likely be someone that children interacted with closely and often.

Teachers might wonder how to keep going when loss occurs on such a personal level, while also helping children as they move through the grieving process. First, teachers must understand that young children do, in fact, experience grief and loss though it might look a lot different from that of adults. Some children will react internally while others may react to loss externally. This doesn't mean that one child is coping any better than the other; it just means that they express grief differently and may need differing levels of support.

Young children may feel a range of emotions when they lose someone close to them. One of the most important ways that we support children is by listening and simply being there for them. Children often experience "moments of grief," moving in and out of grief, seeming fine one moment and actively grieving the

next moment. Playing with certain toys, hearing a favorite song or even completing a classroom routine might jar a memory suddenly. Responding with sensitivity is important as children might experience a variety of feelings and there is no right or wrong way to respond to loss. Listening as children talk about what they're feeling, allowing them to ask questions, then providing honest, direct and brief answers is the best form of support in these moments. Be ready to respond to a variety of feelings.

Another great form of support is ensuring that the classroom is a secure, caring environment that actually helps children to grieve. Ensuring that there is ample space for children to spend time alone or perhaps in a cozy, safe area of the classroom with just one other person could be helpful. Maintaining the highest level of normalcy is important as children begin to adjust to life without the one they lost. Children will likely need to spend time alone or in a small group when they experience strong feelings. It helps when children know where these spaces are in the learning environment and know how they are used. Teachers may be in a haste to want to remove things that remind children of the loss such as photographs or the child's artwork, but it

may be more beneficial to do this gradually. As time progresses and children are learning to cope, it might be a good idea to slowly move mementos to a central place in the classroom or into a memory book or box that children can access when they desire to.

Additionally, when teachers maintain the normal schedule, it communicates to children that they are safe and supported. Children cope better when they know what to expect and know that adults are keeping them safe. Play is an important outlet for grieving, so continue to allow ample opportunities for play throughout the day. The security of regular routines helps children to recognize that life keeps going.

Finally, while it may be instinctive to want to first protect and comfort the children we serve, it is crucial for teachers to consider how they are grieving, too. Instead of hiding your grief, allow children to see that grief is natural and there are things we can do to bring comfort in those moments. Openly expressing your own feelings, encourage children to share their feelings and grief. By establishing your own support system and asking for help when you need it, you ensure that you, yourself, are well enough to help children cope in the healthiest way possible.

## Ask The Healthy Social Behaviors Coaches!

**Question:** I am a teacher in a three-year-old classroom. We have recently been dealing with a traumatic loss in our center. I think I know how to help the children deal with the grief and loss. We have discussed the situation with the children and sent resources home to the families. I have provided several activities including an "I Love You Rituals" from the book of the same name by Becky Bailey. <https://consciousdiscipline.com/store-category/i-love-you-rituals/> I have read and provided several books to help the children with their grief. How can I take care of myself, while also serving the children's needs?

**Answer:** That is a great question. You have probably heard the phrase "You can't pour out of an empty pitcher." Or, think about the announcements that you hear prior to take-off in an airplane; the instructions tell you "In the event of an emergency, first secure your own oxygen mask before you assist those around you." This is known as self-care. The strategy of self-care is most important; it helps you replenish yourself and build resilience to aid in dealing with the daily assault stress has on your life. You have to take care of yourself first before you can help others.

Self-care/Self-compassion emphasizes that you deserve the same care and attention that you are providing to those you are caring for. It is not selfish to think about your own needs; it is essential that you care for yourself first. Strategies for doing this include: exercise; eating healthy; getting enough sleep; staying hydrated; taking time for a hobby; and practicing relaxation and deep breathing on a regular basis. It is important to talk about your feelings with a trusted friend, and even with the children in your classroom. Remember that good, positive relationships are key to dealing with stressful situations. Take the opportunity to get on the floor with the children in your class. The act of playing and laughing together can be a great benefit in the healing process for the children and for you.

A free, talk-to-the-experts webinar, presented by the Healthy Social Behaviors Helpline advisors

### Building Relationships with Families Tuesday, September 17th | 7-8 pm



JOIN WEBINAR

Meeting ID: 367 799 7738

Join us as we discuss how to build relationships with families and talking with families about challenging behaviors using resources we will provide!



Do you have a question you would like to see answered in our column? Feel free to email it to [AskTheBehaviorCoach@gmail.com](mailto:AskTheBehaviorCoach@gmail.com). We will keep your identity private. Your question is probably one someone else needs answering, so ask away! Your time is appreciated!

## Social/Emotional Book Nook



How do you handle supporting a young child after a loved one dies? Do they feel grief and loss too? Just ask Bonnie Zucker! Bonnie authored *Something Very Sad Happened* which helps young children understand that it is normal to have a range of feeling and emotions after a loved one dies. It is written in simple, developmentally appropriate language that also reassures children that love lives on, even after someone is gone. Find it read out loud [here](#).

In each issue you will find a new card to help you build your very own "Calming Choices" Card Set for your classroom.

When I am upset, I can...

FEED A PET



For durability and repetitive use, print on cardstock paper and laminate.

### challenging behaviors helpline

Do you have children who bite? Do children struggle to focus during circle time? Do challenging behaviors cause difficult transitions? Do you spend all day managing behavior? Are you at your wits' end?

Help is available for these and other behavior challenges!



Speak to a Behavior Support Advisor for advice and resources specific to the challenging behaviors in your classroom. 1-888-600-1685 Option 1



Submit your questions to a Behavior Support Advisor online and receive a call or email in response.



Post your questions in the 'Talk to the Expert' Group on our online network, Social Emotional Connections, for early childhood educators. There will also be opportunities to join free webinars on challenging topics or classroom activities.

For more information, scan the QR code or go to [childcareresourcesinc.org/challenging-behaviors-helpline](http://childcareresourcesinc.org/challenging-behaviors-helpline)



Contact us for more information!

[Renae.Lingafelt-Beeker@childcareresourcecenter.org](mailto:Renae.Lingafelt-Beeker@childcareresourcecenter.org)  
336-245-4900 ext. 1010

[CWhite@childcareresourcecenter.org](mailto:CWhite@childcareresourcecenter.org)  
336-245-4900 ext. 1017

