

# Let's Talk About Grief

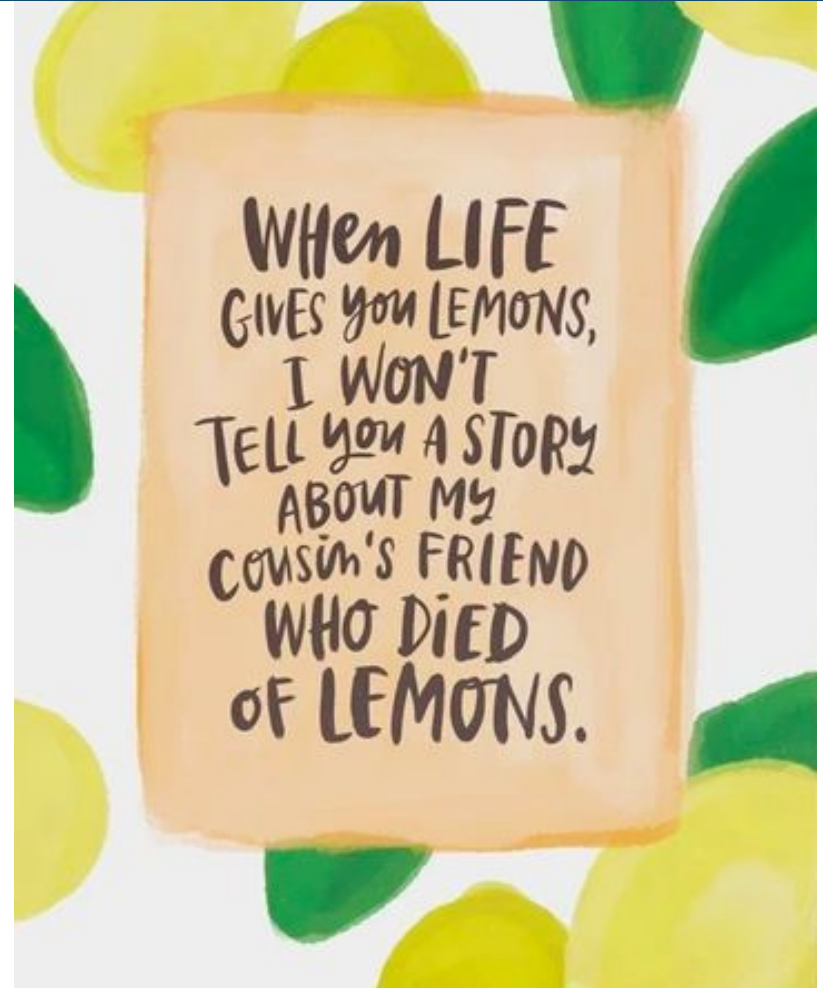
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WELL, THIS JUST SUCKS.  
I WISH I HAD A BETTER WAY  
TO SAY IT, BUT MY BRAIN  
FEELS TOTALLY STUCK RIGHT  
NOW. BUT I JUST WANT YOU TO  
KNOW THAT EVEN THOUGH  
I MIGHT NOT ALWAYS HAVE  
EXACTLY THE RIGHT  
WORDS, YOU WILL ALWAYS  
HAVE ME. I'M NOT GOING  
ANYWHERE. SO I HOPE  
YOU'RE COOL WITH THAT. BECAUSE  
I LOVE YOU.

Why are we talking about  
**grief?**

# Overview

1. Understanding grief
2. How to show up for someone who is grieving
3. Creating a grief-aware camp culture



# First, a little bit about us and Experience Camps

**Sara Deren & Brie Overton**

**Founder & CEO + Chief Clinical Officer**

**We give grieving children  
experiences that change  
their lives forever.**



# The issue of grief is...

## → Common

- ◆ 1 in 5 children will experience a significant death loss before age 18 – and 7% of all children experience the death of a parent or sibling.
- ◆ COVID-19 is accelerating loss: researchers at Penn State and USC found that, for every person who dies of Covid-19, nine close family members are affected – meaning that 4.5 million more Americans are grieving right now.

## → Important

- ◆ Grieving children are especially vulnerable to negative outcomes such as increased anxiety, depression, and even an increased risk of mortality.
- ◆ When we talk about grief, we can reduce isolation and promote resilience, confidence and self-esteem.

## → Actionable

- ◆ By educating others and taking action, we create a grief-smart culture that has extensive ripple effects in our mental health systems and communities.

# Grief isn't just about death

- Death of a person or pet
  - Cancellation of a life event
  - Loved one with illness
  - Child hospitalized
  - Natural disaster
  - Public tragedy
  - End of a relationship
  - Divorce
  - Job loss
  - Camp-celation
-

# Debunking the Myths

## Myth #1

There are stages of grief

## Myth #2

There is a timeline

## Myth #3

The goal of grief is to “get back to normal” or “move on”

How can you  
show up for  
others?



# Let's start with what NOT to do

## Don't say:

- I know how you feel.
- It will get better with time.
- They are in a better place.
- Everything happens for a reason.
- Be strong.
- At least...

**Don't try  
to fix it.  
It's not  
broken.**

# More DON'Ts

→ **Don't reference faith or religion unless you are certain it will resonate for that individual.**

◆ "God only gives us what we can handle"

◆ "The best get called home"

→ **Don't feel like you have to have a "comparable" loss. It's ok to not be able to relate.**

→ **Don't ask questions that imply blame or responsibility.**

◆ When hearing about a father's lung cancer, asking "was he a smoker?"

◆ When someone has died by suicide, asking "did you know he was so depressed?"

So then what CAN I  
say and do?

# When a loss just happened...

## What to SAY:

- **Acknowledge the gravity of the situation.**
  - ◆ Oh Jen, that sucks.
  - ◆ Thank you for telling me.
  - ◆ I'm here for you.
  - ◆ Grief is so difficult. Please take care of yourself.
  - ◆ Take all the time you need.
  - ◆ I'm not sure what the right thing is to say. I care about you.
- **Always. Say. Something.**

## What to DO:

- Send a card
- Send a gift card for UberEats or a Goldbelly meal
- Attend the service
- Can I help you...finish this project, bring lunch tomorrow, research local florists, tell other people, etc.
- Make a donation in the person's name

# Be present.

- **Sit in the mud.** Be where they are. Witnessing is a huge part of what helps to heal. When people witness your pain, it feels shared, and the isolation is lessened.
- **Rock your body.** Use good body language. Make eye contact. Look at the person. Stay attuned. Have a posture that shows you are attentive to the person. Just nodding and being present is huge.
- **Paraphrase and summarize.** Try to focus on what they feel and reflect back. “It sounds like that was such a difficult time for you” or “you were angry”.



# Grief at Camp

# What grieving kids say...

Sometimes I can't concentrate

When I'm at camp, I don't want to think about my grief

Just because I'm laughing and playing doesn't mean I'm not grieving

My person died a long time ago, but I still miss her every day

I like when people ask me about him

I don't want attention

I sometimes get angry that he's gone

I don't like when people ask me about him

I feel like nobody understands

Ask me what helps

I try to be strong so nobody worries

I just want to feel normal

# How to be grief-aware at camp

**DIRECTORS:** Talk with the camper before camp specifically about the death, how they cope, and how you plan to support them if in need while at camp. Make sure *they* know *you* know about the death and are available for support.

Listen



(set)  
Limits



Look  
(for warning signs)



# #TAG (Talk About Grief)

# Thank you!

Drop us a line anytime.  
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