

Helping Teenagers Deal with Grief

COX GREEN SCHOOL

OVERVIEW

TODAY'S DISCUSSION

Theories of Grief

Why grief might look different

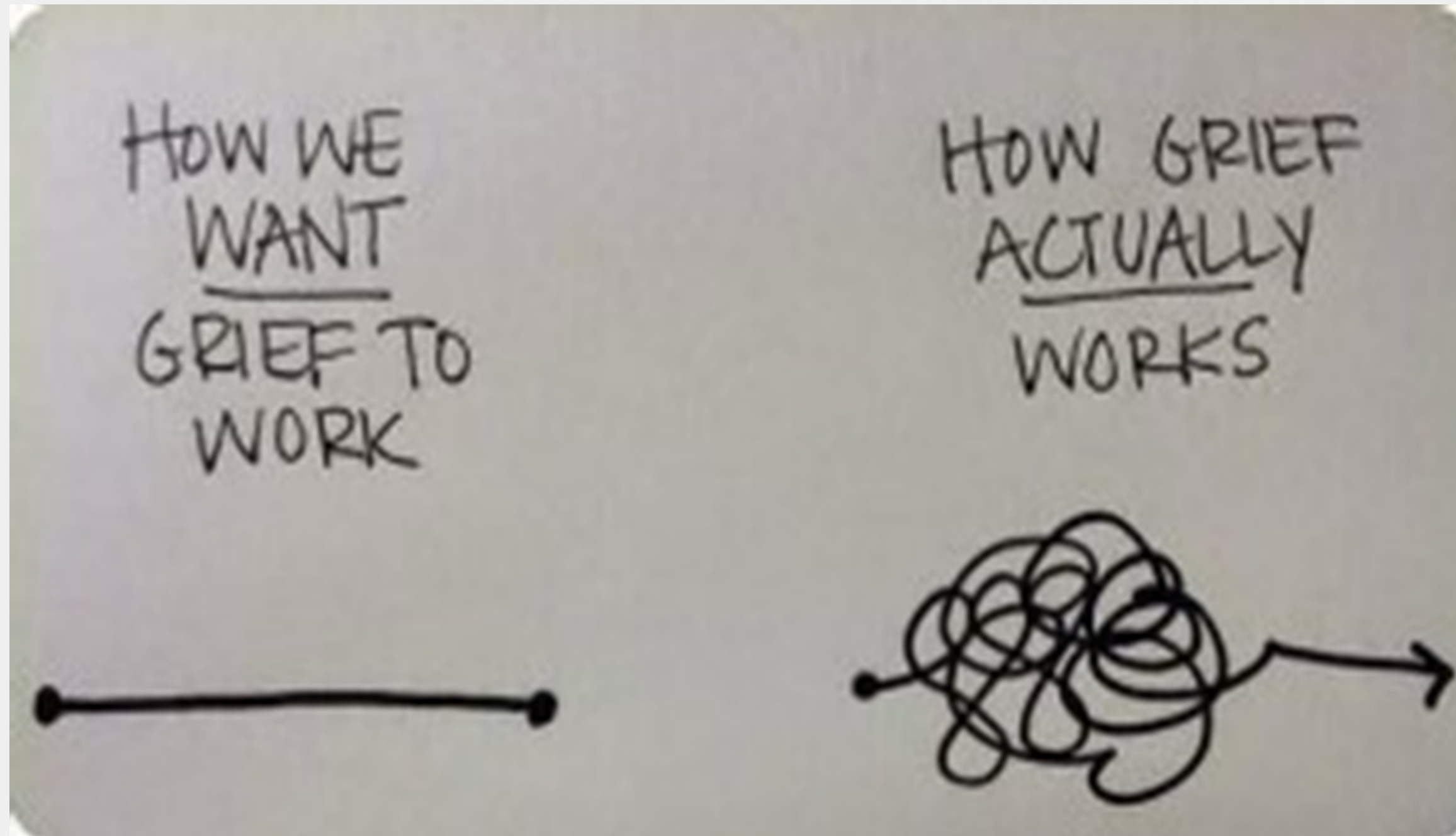
How grief might look different

How to support young people

Taking care of yourself

Other support/resources

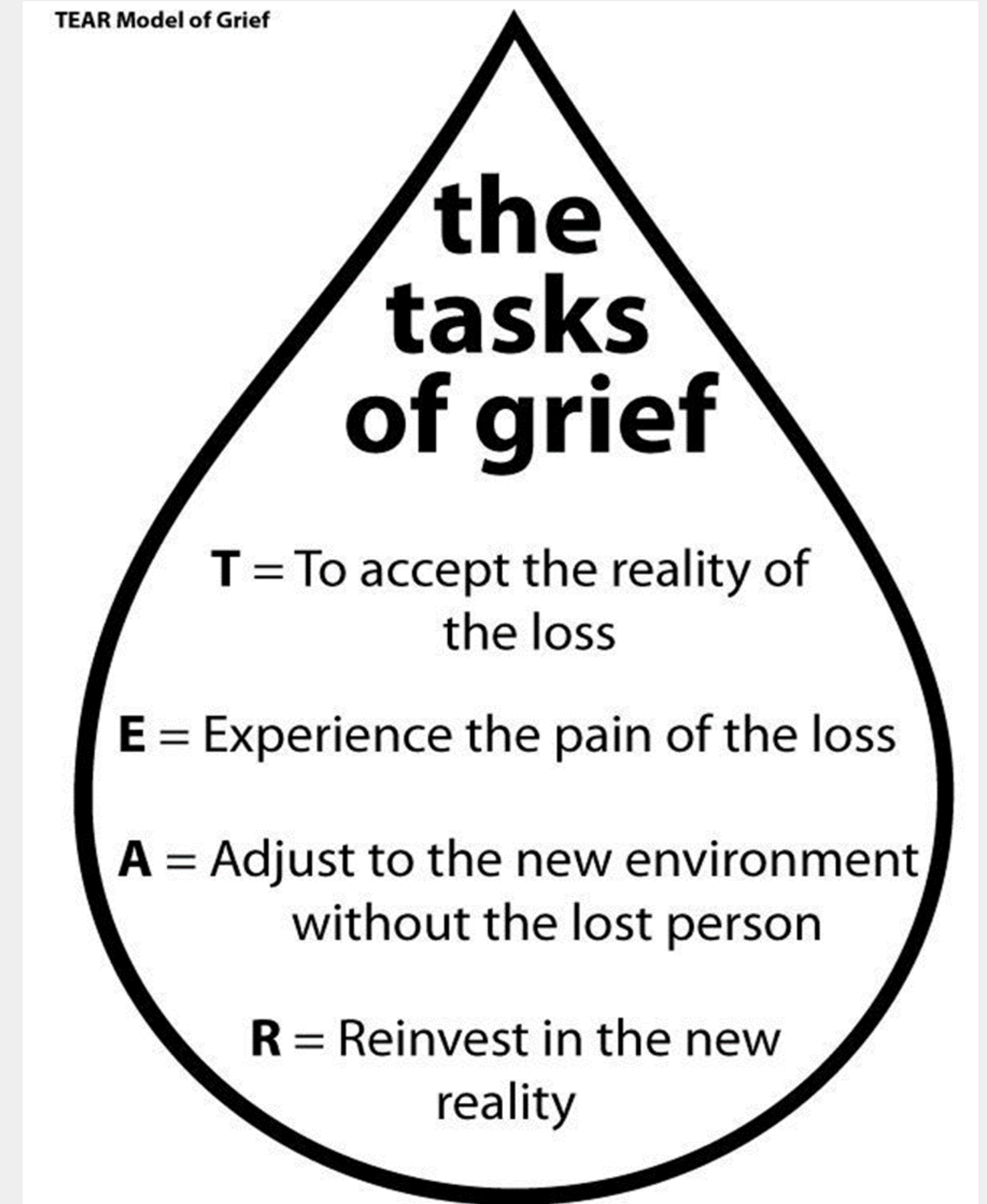
HOW GRIEF WORKS



THEORIES OF GRIEF

Warden's Four Tasks of Mourning

- 'Task' - grieving and mourning is a task!
- It used to be thought that it was important to sever the links with the deceased and move on, but now it's accepted that finding that enduring connection with the loved one, so they're still being talked about and still being remembered, is a healthier way of grieving.



THEORIES OF GRIEF

Tonkin's Growing Around Grief

- We do not move on, we grow around it
- Grief doesn't always disappear with time. Despite grief not going away, this doesn't mean you will always feel as bad as you do right now, because your life will grow around grief.



Lois Tonkin (1996)

STAGES OF GRIEF

- Shock
- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining (making deals with self or 'God')
- Depression
- Testing (experimenting with ways to deal with grief)
- Acceptance

Everybody experiences these stages at different times and in different ways.

WHY GRIEF MIGHT LOOK DIFFERENT

The way we support every teenager will be different, as each individual will have different needs. This may depend on the following:

- Their unique relationship with the young person that died
- How the individual died
- Their support system
- Their own experiences with death
- Their own strengths and weaknesses when it comes to managing and regulating emotions
- Their own beliefs

HOW GRIEF MIGHT LOOK DIFFERENT

There are many different types of grief, such as 'Normal', 'Complex', 'Cumulative' and 'Collective' Grief. Each individual will experience grief in different ways

- The 'Mourner'
- The 'Doer'
- The 'Helper'

Differences can show:

- Physically
- Emotionally
- Mentally

HOW TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND VALIDATION

This may be their first time dealing with death and grief!

Acknowledge their feelings, opinions, importance and emotions.

Validation

Not everybody is going to have the same feelings. However the young person feels is valid. Let them know that. Do not minimise their feelings.

BE AVAILABLE

Listen to them

Being listened to and feeling heard is so powerful. Use verbal and physical cues to show that you are taking in what they have to say. Even if you do not agree with what is being said, try not to interrupt.

Answering questions about death

Be upfront and honest. Telling a young person that everything will be ok, or that 'they are in a better place now' is not validating.

BE PATIENT AND OPEN MINDED

Grief looks different

You may experience some changes in behaviour. Some people may talk about them, some people may find it too hard. Get to know what your young people are comfortable with and be patient with them. Allow them to grieve in their own way.

Different beliefs

Everybody has different beliefs about death. Maybe you believe there is a heaven and hell, maybe you think there's nothing, maybe you're stoic and believe one person's death doesn't matter. That is ok! We are all different.

IT IS OK TO TALK ABOUT THEM

These young people have their whole lives ahead of them...

This means some milestones will be missed. GCSE results day was tough for some. There will be birthdays, learning to drive, first jobs etc. You can acknowledge the deceased is not there.

Mixed feelings

We are able to have a happy day or event, whilst experiencing some sadness that somebody we thought would be there, can no longer be there. You are allowed to feel happy and sad at the same time.

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

THE OXYGEN MASK ANALOGY

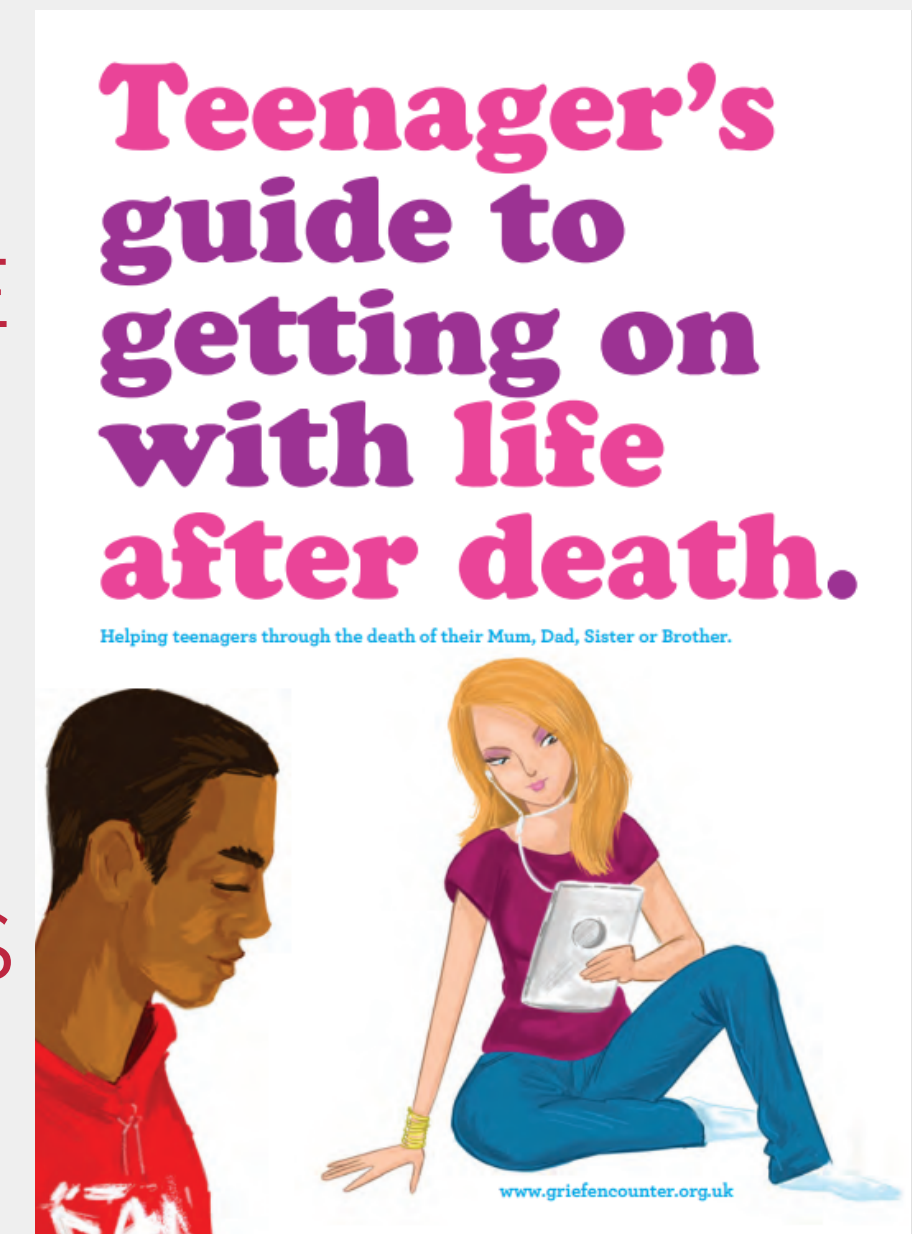
"...Place the oxygen mask on yourself first before helping small children or others who may need your assistance."



SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

The Teenagers Guide to Getting on with Life after Death

- GRIEF ENCOUNTER HAVE DEVELOPED THIS 28 PAGE PDF FOR TEENAGERS
- IT ACKNOWLEDGES SOME OF THE CHALLENGES AND WORRIES THAT A GRIEVING TEEN MIGHT BE EXPERIENCING.
- BY NAMING THEM, IT HELPS NORMALISE THE EXPERIENCES AND EVEN THOUGH THE BOOK CAN'T OFFER A CURE FOR GRIEF, HELPING THE YOUNG PERSON TO UNDERSTAND THE PROCESS CAN BE VERY HELPFUL.



Useful TEDTalks

- HOW TO COMFORT A GRIEVING TEEN BY BRIEDGET PARK
- WE DON'T 'MOVE ON' FROM GRIEF, WE MOVE FORWARD WITH IT BY NORA MCINERY

Useful charities

- GRIEF ENCOUNTER
- THE GOOD GRIEF TRUST
- SAMARTIANS
- BEREAVEMENT TRUST