



TF-CBT FOR CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENT TRAUMATIC GRIEF

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OVERVIEW

AGENDA

- 01.** BRIEF review of GRIEF
- 02.** Sequence of Treatment
- 03.** TF-CBT Component Adaptations & Considerations
- 04.** Grief-Focused Components
- 05.** Treatment Review and Closure
- 06.** Resources



BRIEF REVIEW OF GRIEF

CHILDHOOD TRAUMATIC GRIEF (CTG)

Cohen, Mannarino, & Deblinger (2017)

- Ongoing controversy related to distinguishing between “typical” and “complicated” grief
- May develop in response to death of an important person in child’s life
- Manifest by significant trauma symptoms that interfere with typical grief response
 - Can occur following unexpected, violent, or accidental deaths (e.g., MVA, other accidents, homicide, suicide, natural disasters, war, etc.)
 - Can also develop traumatic grief after deaths that are not unexpected, violent, or sudden
 - Death is *perceived* as traumatic by child, even if not perceived this way for adults



“Children with CTG are ‘stuck’ on the traumatic aspects of the death and avoid memories of the deceased because these memories segue into reminders of the frightening way the person died. They don’t like to think or talk about reminders. This avoidance prevents them from successfully negotiating the usual tasks of bereavement that involve reminiscing about the dead person.”

SOURCE

CTGWeb A web-based learning course for
Using TF-CBT With Childhood Traumatic Grief

SEQUENCE OF TREATMENT



TYPICAL TF-CBT COMPONENTS

Involves same trauma-focused components of TF-CBT (Psychoeducation/Parenting, Relaxation, Affective Modulation, etc.)

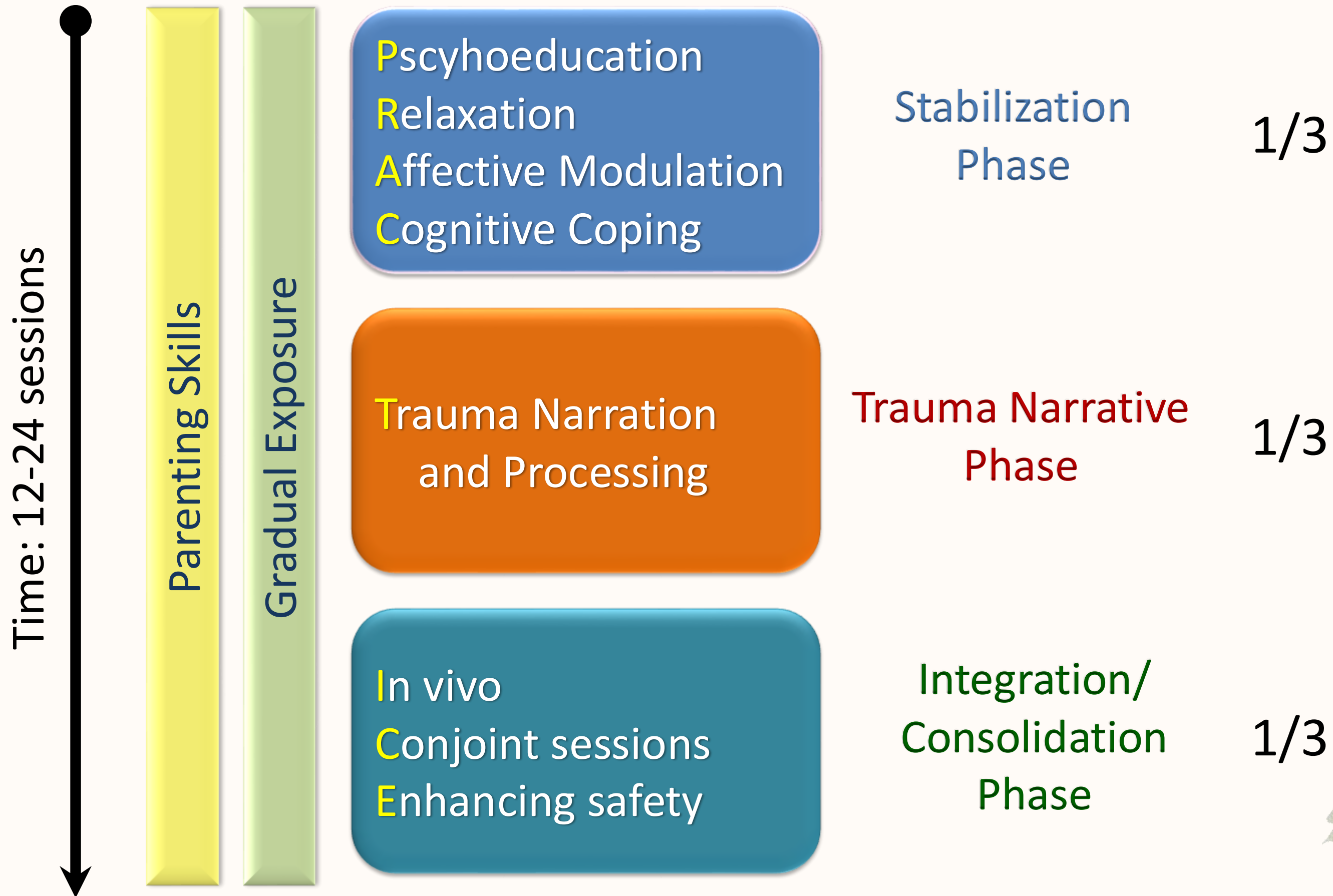


GRIEF-FOCUSED COMPONENTS

Once the TF components are completed, child and CG should be “unstuck” from traumatic aspects of the death and ready to engage in these components, which are based on typical tasks for bereavement.

- Typically, 6-8 sessions

TF-CBT PACING



TF-CBT COMPONENT AND GRIEF-RELATED CONSIDERATIONS

PSYCHOEDUCATION

- Trauma-specific information should be related to the cause of death
 - Share stats relevant to family's situation
 - E.g., Related to frequency of MVAs/deaths in the community due to DV
- Helpful for reducing feelings of isolation
- Depending on cause of death, may be important to address intentionality
 - I.e., Due to intentional act or random/natural event

PARENTING

- Maintain sensitivity → many times CGs are also grieving and assuming main caregiving responsibilities
 - E.g., is CG now managing all childrearing activities alone, consideration of financial burden, potential legal tasks



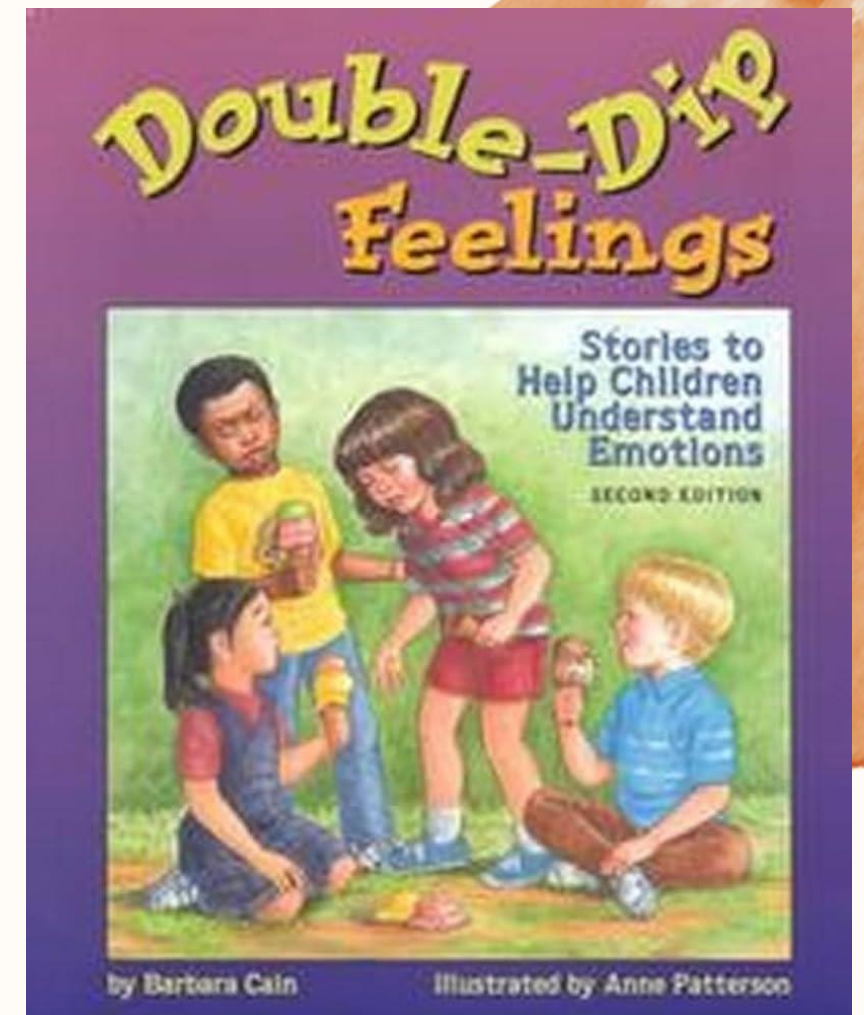
TF-CBT COMPONENT AND GRIEF-RELATED CONSIDERATIONS

RELAXATION

- Typical relaxation techniques may be further complicated for youth with CTG because cues that were previously innocuous or even comforting may become trauma/loss reminders
- May necessitate close work with CG to develop new comforting rituals
 - Note on thought interruption: traumatic thoughts should not be replaced with thoughts of deceased person while person was still alive

AFFECTIVE EXPRESSION & MODULATION

- Important source of affective dysregulation is real/perceived loss of safety – important to support child in expressing those feelings
- Bring in double-dip feelings to set the stage for expressing multiple emotions



TF-CBT COMPONENT AND GRIEF-RELATED CONSIDERATIONS

COGNITIVE COPING

- Largely unchanged as far as process

TRAUMA NARRATIVE

- Would still do narratives for any other types of trauma
- Grief: Progresses in a similar fashion (gradual) – should avoid starting in a way that immediately prompts difficult loss reminder
- Start by asking more general questions
 - *Note that many of the “general” questions we use to initiate TN component (e.g., who is in your family?” “What are your favorite activities?”) may serve as trauma/loss reminders → intentionally select more neutral topics (e.g., school, friend group, etc.)
- TN next progresses to context surrounding the death (e.g., “what was the day like?”) and facts about what happened
- End with sensory details, child’s thoughts and feelings, and worst moments



TF-CBT COMPONENT AND GRIEF-RELATED CONSIDERATIONS

COGNITIVE PROCESSING

- Assess for sense of blame/responsibility
 - Throughout component, aim it to discuss causation for death that is as realistic as possible (not uncommon for younger children to develop fantasies about reuniting with CG or caregiver hiding somewhere)
- If person died quickly/with little pain/discomfort – important that child know that
- In cases where child's perception of pain/suffering may be true, therapist can offer alternative ways for thinking about the death by focusing on other aspects of person's final moments, e.g., person may have been afraid/in pain, **AND** they also likely wanted to tell you how much they love you/that they were proud of you.
- Cognitive processing with CG, especially if they are grieving



TF-CBT COMPONENT AND GRIEF-RELATED CONSIDERATIONS

CONJOINT SESSIONS

- Progresses in much of the same way – consider whether CG is also grieving
- Additional grief-related activities targeted during latter grief-focused components of tx

ENHANCING FUTURE SAFETY

- Progresses in much of the same way
- With respect to grief components, will further practice seeking of comfort and social support with surviving loved ones





GRIEF-FOCUSED COMPONENTS

**GRIEF
PSYCHOED**

**GRIEVING THE
LOSS &
RESOLVING
AMBIVALENT
FEELINGS**

**PRESERVING
POSITIVE
MEMORIES**

**REDEFINING THE
RELATIONSHIP &
COMMITTING
TO NEW
RELATIONSHIPS**



GRIEF-FOCUSED
COMPONENT 1:



GRIEF
PSYCHOEDUCATION

GRIEF PSYCHOEDUCATION

Necessary to first resolve/address the traumatic aspects of the death first before you can engage in these later tasks related to processing grief

Many children and adults still find it very difficult to discuss death and may have several misconceptions

- For younger children, understanding the permanency of death can be challenging, may also be more preoccupied with more concrete concerns
- Help CGs understand how coping and grief can look different for children at different developmental levels
- Normalize wide range of grief responses including that there are no “set” timetables for what grief should look like


*Particularly important for clinicians to be very sensitive to the family’s religious, cultural, and personal beliefs and associated rituals





GRIEF PSYCHOEDUCATION

Make sure to use accurate terminology to refer to death and prompt caregiver to do the same



Examples of language to avoid:

- Daddy went to sleep
- Daddy passed...
- We lost daddy...
- Went on a trip
- Cashed in his chips
- Kicked the bucket
- Went to a big ranch in the sky

Instead, can say things like...

- Daddy died and he's in heaven
- People die when they are very sick and there isn't any more medicine to help them

GRIEF PSYCHOEDUCATION

- *Death*: “Someone’s body stops working forever.”
- *Accident or illness*: “No one made a choice for the person’s body to stop working; it wasn’t on purpose.”
- *Suicide*: “The person chose to make his [her] body stop working. Most people who commit suicide have a disease called *depression* that causes them to not think clearly and to make bad choices. One of those choices might be to make their body stop working.”
- *Homicide*: “Someone made a choice to make another person’s body stop working.”
- *Overdose*: “It’s important to take medicine only the way the doctor says we should. Most medicines make our bodies work better. But if someone takes the wrong medicine, or if he [she] takes too much medicine, it can hurt his [her] body, or even make it stop working. If the person has a disease called *addiction*, he [she] may choose to take medicine that hurts his [her] body. Sometimes these medicines are called *drugs* because they are usually not given by the doctor. Drugs may make the person’s body stop working.”

Cohen, Mannarino, & Deblinger (2017)

Activities to Consider

- Read developmentally appropriate books
- Play grief-education game (e.g., The Good Bye Game)/grief related apps
- Ask child to describe in words/draw picture of what they think happens when someone dies
- List of different feelings children/grown ups have when someone close to them dies/feelings brainstorm

**Difference between discussion of death in the abstract vs. talking directly about grief experience*

REFLECT AND SHARE

**WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES
YOU HAVE USED IN YOUR OWN PRACTICE
TO HELP CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
IMPROVE THEIR UNDERSTANDING
OF GRIEF?**

GRIEF-FOCUSED
COMPONENT 2:



GRIEVING THE LOSS &
RESOLVING AMBIVALENT
FEELINGS

”WHAT I MISS AND WHAT I DON’T MISS”

GRIEVING THE LOSS & RESOLVING AMBIVALENT FEELINGS



Following death of a loved one, child faces many challenging and confusing feelings. Therapists should normalize all the feelings and directly talk about mixed/ambivalent feelings.



Grieving the death encourages children to describe what they have lost related to the comforting and loving aspects of the relationship and things that might have occurred in the future (but now will not)

- These will be discussed separately, but are often addressed together in treatment

“

IT'S IMPORTANT FOR THE CHILD, IN
ORDER TO ACCEPT THE MAGNITUDE OF
THE LOSS, TO BE ABLE TO NAME THESE
THINGS THAT THEY'VE LOST.

”

— Judith Cohen

GRIEVING THE LOSS

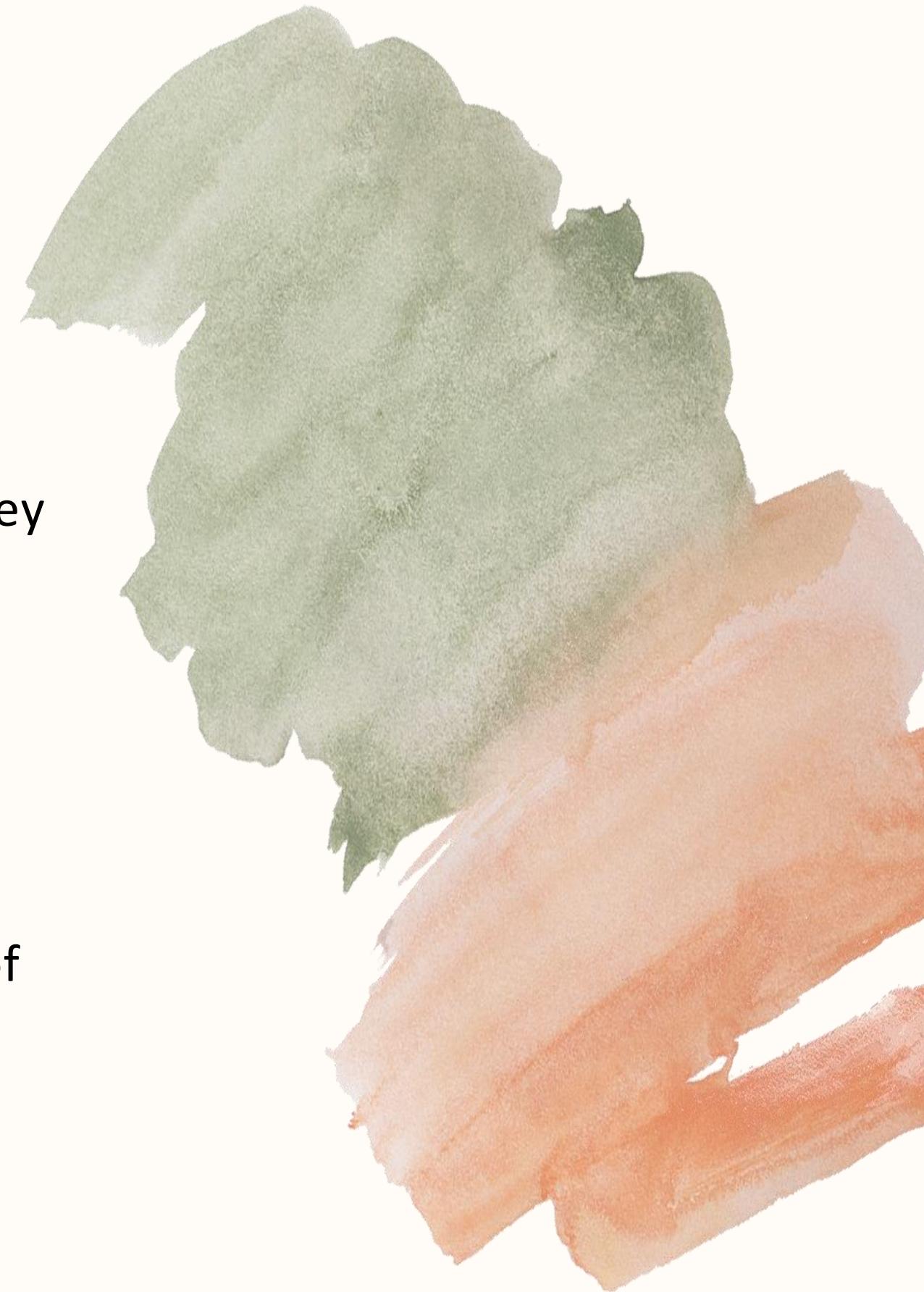
“WHAT I MISS”

During this component, children are encouraged to name several things they miss about deceased individual

- This is likely to make the child feel both happy and sad (double dips)
- This can range from the most mundane of tasks/activities to the most unique aspects of the relationship

*It is not anticipated that child will “complete” the grieving process during therapy. This can take several weeks, instead goal is to model acceptance of feelings

Also important to discuss anticipating “loss reminders” especially if the activities that the child used to do with the deceased person.



POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES:

GRIEVING THE LOSS

“*WHAT I MISS*”



BEREVEMENT BOOK

Can guide the child with specific prompts, not unlike the process of creating a TN. E.g.,

- Things I miss doing with mom
- Places I miss going with mom
- Special rituals/activities with mom that I miss
- Special things about mom that I miss



CREATE AN ANAGRAM

- Create anagram using the person’s name and attach characteristics of the person to each letter – child encouraged to identify which characteristics they will miss the most



COPING AHEAD

Things I will miss in the future:

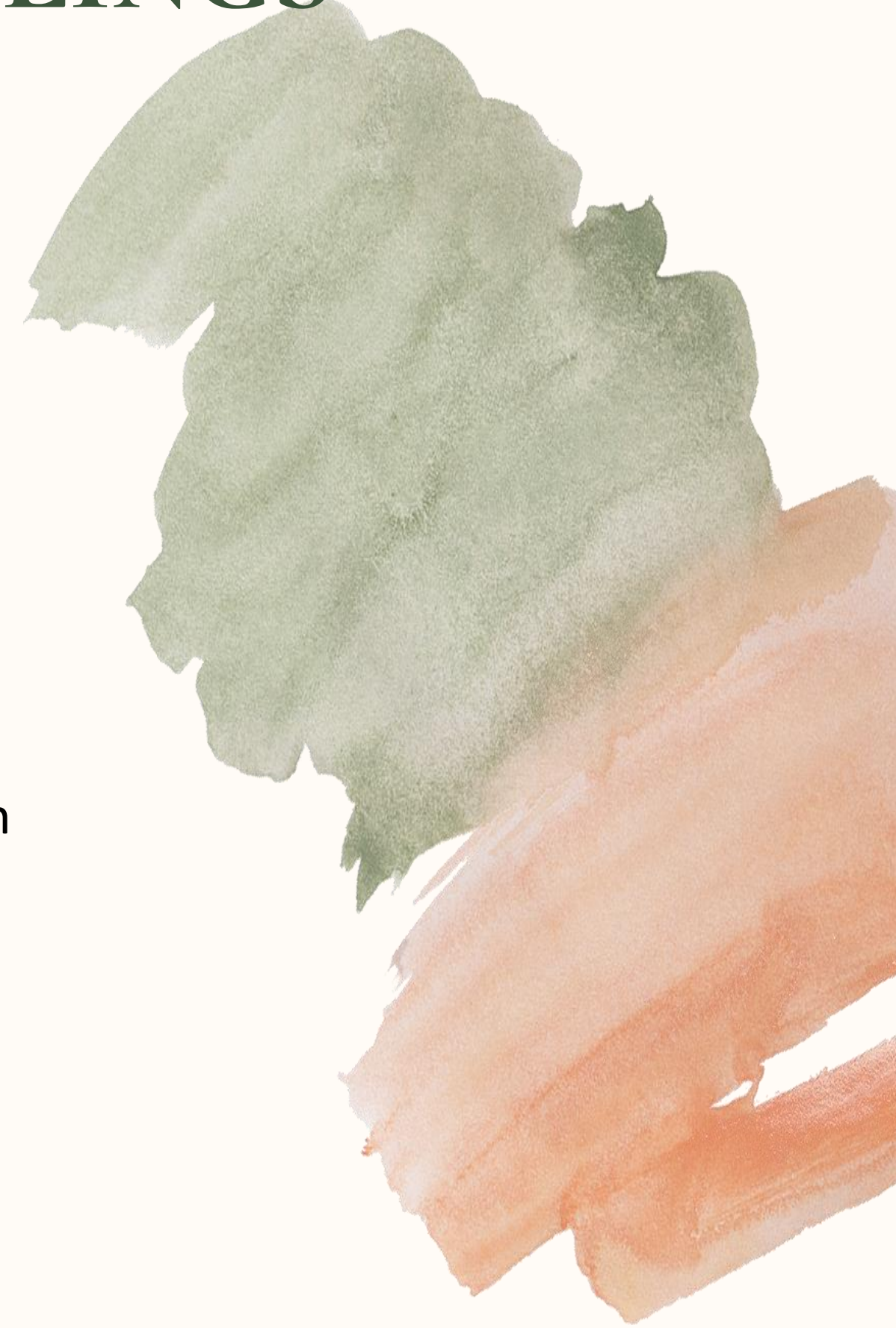
How I will cope:

RESOLVING AMBIVALENT FEELINGS

“WHAT I DON’T MISS”

It is typically difficult to acknowledge shortcomings of a deceased person. This may be further intensified when the death occurred in a sudden/unexpected/traumatic manner.

- This can lead to deceased being idealized unrealistically
- May be unresolved conflicts between child and the deceased
- Child may regret some of the things they said or did
 - Note: This process may be made more difficult in instances in which the deceased was causal in their own death (e.g., suicide, drug overdose). In these cases, child also has to deal with stigma/negative cognitions associated with these events
 - If these cognitions not already address during cog processing of narration, should be addressed during this component



POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES:

RESOLVING AMBIVALENT FEELINGS

“*WHAT I DON'T MISS*”



IMAGINED CONVERSATION

If the family's religious beliefs are consistent with this perspective, the child may choose to have a mental conversation with the deceased's soul or spirit

WRITE A LETTER

Child encouraged to say all the things they wished they had said before death of loved one. This can also include either imagining or writing back of a response the deceased would have wanted to say to the child in order to resolve lingering conflict

- Care should be taken that this does not further confuse younger children

WHAT ARE OTHER EXAMPLES?

GRIEF-FOCUSED
COMPONENT 3:

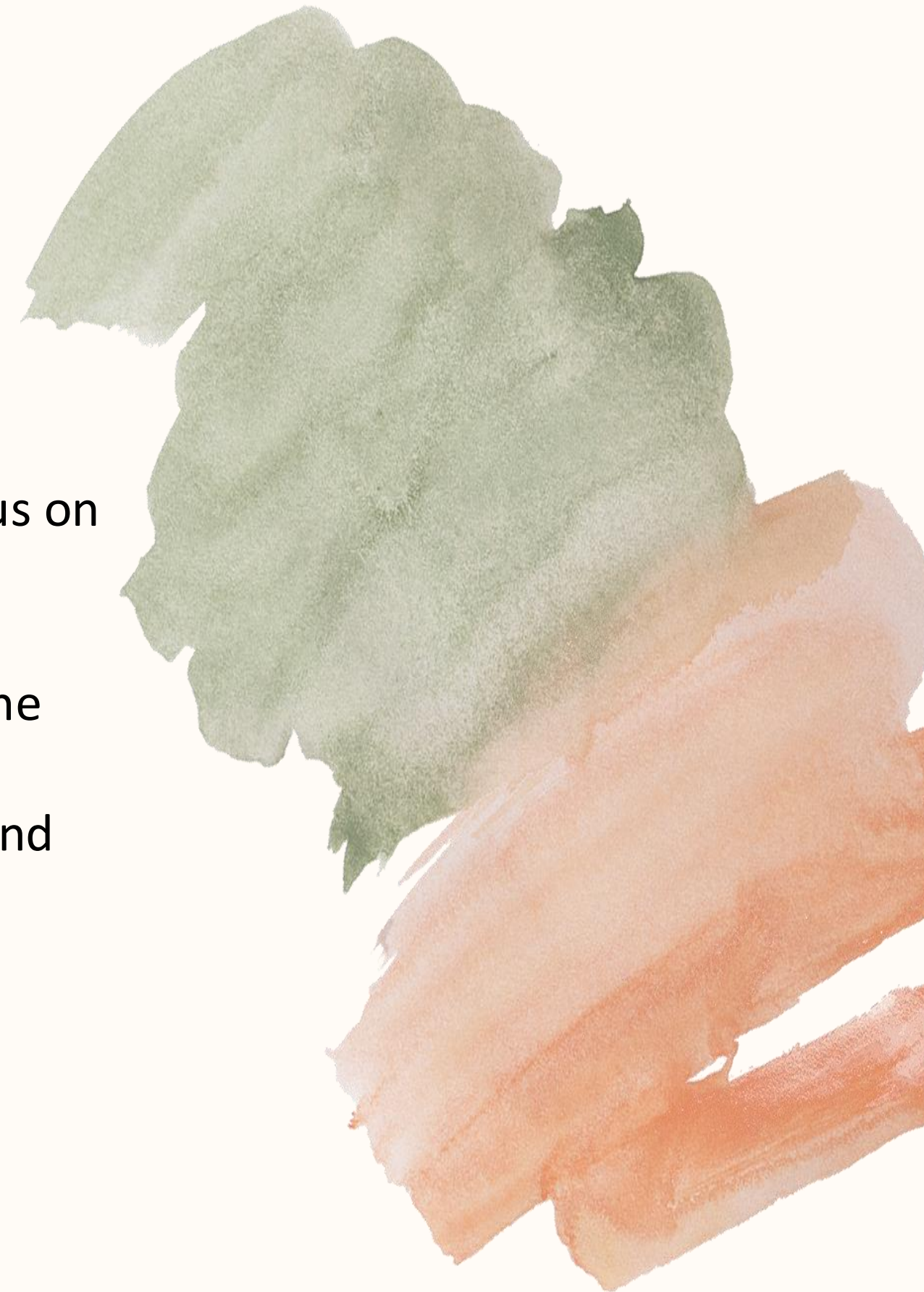


PRESERVING POSITIVE
MEMORIES

PRESERVING POSITIVE MEMORIES

In initiating the earlier components, children are usually better able to focus on positive aspects of the relationship with the deceased

- Recording and preserving positive memories is bound to cause sadness AND it also allows children to reexperience joy previously shared with the deceased
- It's very important that children understand they still have the capacity and PERMISSION to be happy

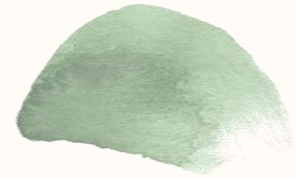


REFLECT AND SHARE

**WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES
YOU HAVE USED IN YOUR OWN PRACTICE
TO HELP CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
PRESERVE POSITIVE MEMORIES OF THEIR
LOVED ONES?**

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES:

PRESERVING POSITIVE MEMORIES



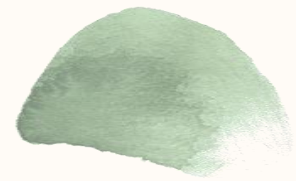
MEMORY BOOK/BOX/COLLAGE

- May consist of pictures, keepsakes, favorite book, hand drawn pictures/poems, compilation of memories
 - If/when appropriate, can also include activities generated from earlier components (e.g., anagram)
 - Can actually be aided by availability of smartphones – get creative (videos, slide shows, voice recordings, etc.)
- Some children may welcome collaborating with other family members (helpful for connecting with support system), whereas some children may prefer to collect/include items on their own.
- Some additional prompts/ideas:
 - Person's clothes
 - Funny habit/mannerisms
 - Hobbies
 - "Trips we took together"
 - "Favorite memory"
 - "Things this person taught me"
 - Person's favorite expression/joke



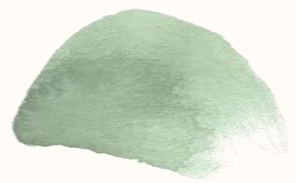
POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES:

PRESERVING POSITIVE MEMORIES



MEMORIAL/MEMORIAL SERVICE

- This can involve recreating a previous service, especially in the event that the child was unable to attend
- Can also involve planning a new memorial service for child and family
- Creating a memorial



ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Younger children may have difficulty remembering activities or events shared with the deceased.
 - In such cases it can be helpful to ask others to help provide positive memories/stories
 - Can be helpful for these children to look at photographs with them and the deceased and even writing stories about the photographs/drawing pictures
- **Ensure you are working closely with the family to incorporate aspects of family's identity, beliefs, religion, culture, etc.

GRIEF-FOCUSED
COMPONENT 4:



REDEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP
AND COMMITTING TO PRESENT
RELATIONSHIPS

“

IN ORDER TO SUCCESSFULLY GRIEVE THE LOSS
OF A LOVED ONE, IT'S IMPORTANT FOR THE
CHILD TO CONVERT THE RELATIONSHIP FROM
ONE OF INTERACTION TO A RELATIONSHIP THAT
IS BASED ON MEMORY,
NOT CURRENT INTERACTION

”

— Judith Cohen

REDEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP & COMMITTING TO PRESENT ONES

Following death, it is not unusual for children to withdraw from others or be less engaged in activities, but isolation can lead to increased sadness and loss of important support

- This also emphasizes the importance of consistent inclusion of the surviving caregiver throughout sessions

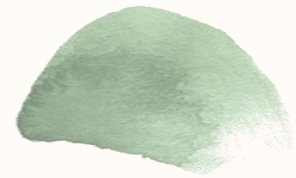
This can be addressed by helping child understand that even though the relationship was in the past, they can carry things from the relationship with them into the present

- Emphasize that although no one can ever take the place of the person who died, another important part of the grief process is identifying people in the present who can take on some of those roles
- Child should be supported in understanding that it is necessary and acceptable for them to form new relationships that will help them go through the rest of their lives



POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES:

REDEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP & COMMITTING TO PRESENT ONES

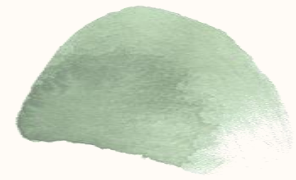


BALLOON ACTIVITY

- Child given a drawing of 2 balloons, one is anchored on the ground, the other is floating in air
 - Anchored balloon
 - Represents all that the child still possesses, including memories of the deceased
 - Floating balloon
 - Represents things the child has lost
- Child asked to fill each balloon drawing with words/pictures that describe what they have lost and what they will still possess
- *Activity is helpful for children to understand that although memories and other aspects of the relationship live on, the person is dead and thus, the *active/interactive* nature of the relationship is also gone



REDEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP & COMMITTING TO PRESENT ONES



ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Many children with CTG cling to interactive aspects of their relationship with the deceased for as long as possible
- Child can be encouraged to make a list of important attachment figures and include information about the positive ways in which each individual contributes to child's life
 - Younger children can be directed to draw pictures related to these individuals
 - Layne, Pynoos, et al. (2001) describe process of “auditioning: others for roles that deceased used to fill in child's life
- Maintain an awareness of other obstacles that may interfere with recommitting to existing relationships, including:
 - Feelings of betrayal
 - Children may also be wary of strong attachments for fear of additional deaths/traumatic separations
 - Can use cognitive coping techniques, or picture demonstration (keeping pain at arms length/behind a wall)

TREATMENT REVIEW & CLOSURE

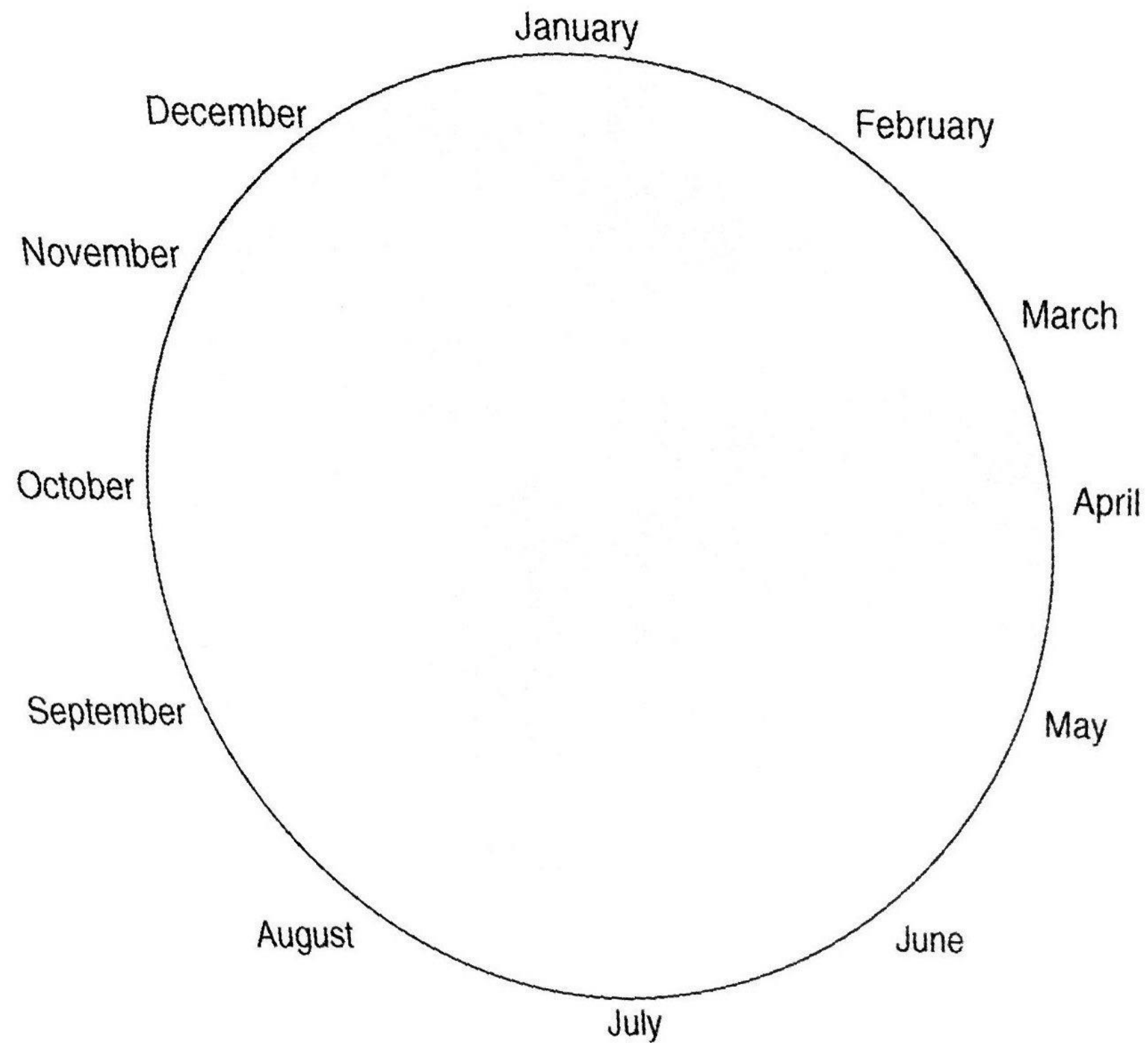


TREATMENT REVIEW & CLOSURE

- Assess progress achieved throughout treatment
- After completion of grief related components should also plan for additional conjoint session where child can share completed activities with caregiver
 - Review what was learned throughout treatment
- During treatment closure – we are preparing the child and their caregiver for trauma and loss reminders (e.g., anniversaries, birthdays, holidays) and being flexible around how family plans to cope with those events
- Define meaning in the experience and set appropriate expectations
 - Finding meaning in life after trauma (address meaning from both trauma and grief aspects of loss)
 - This can also occur more spontaneously as a result of narrative and cognitive processing components previously
 - Planned reflection using series of question
- Preparing for treatment termination:
 - "3 P's" → Predict, Plan, and Permit
- Graduate from treatment



The Circle of Life



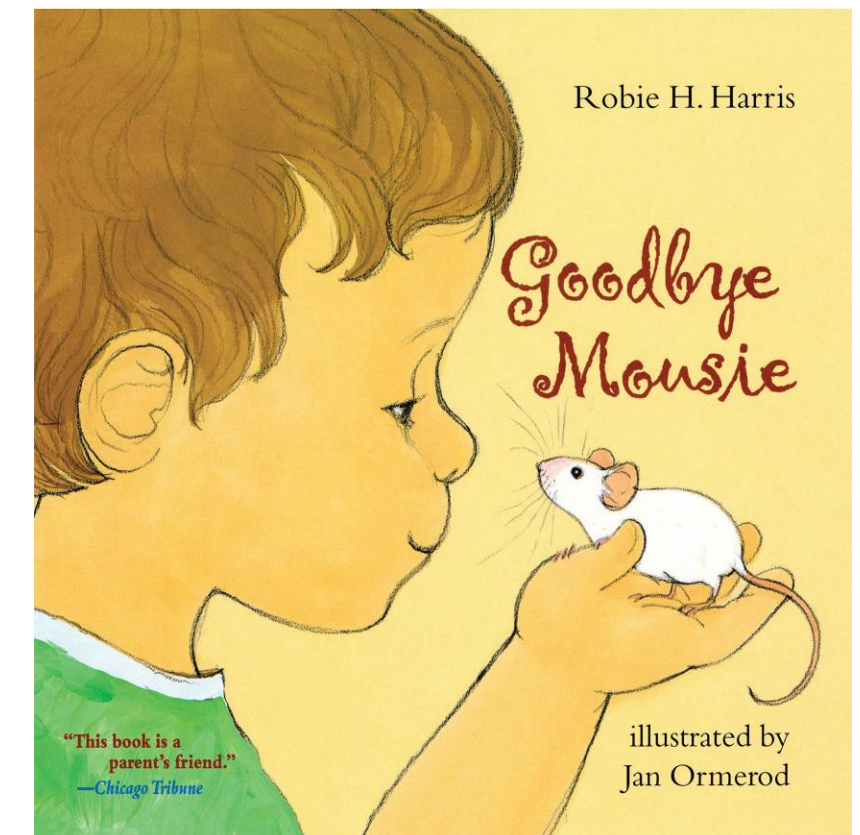
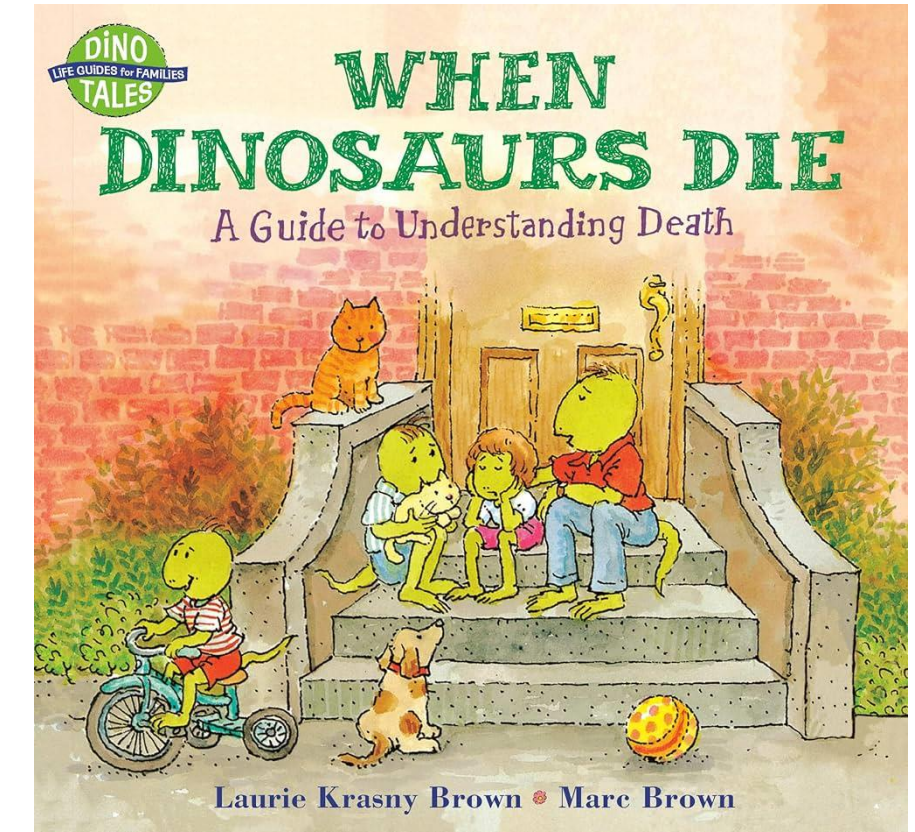
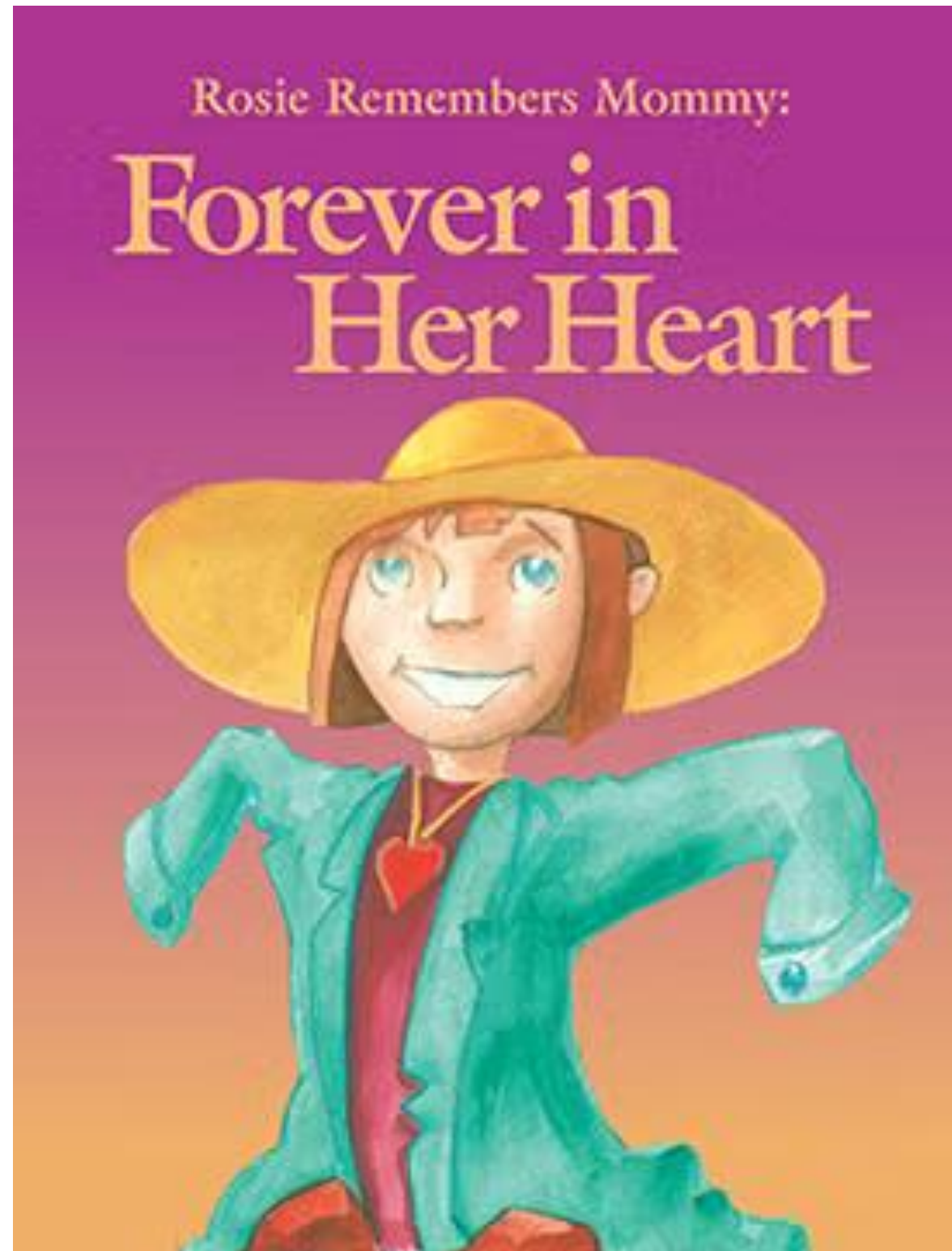
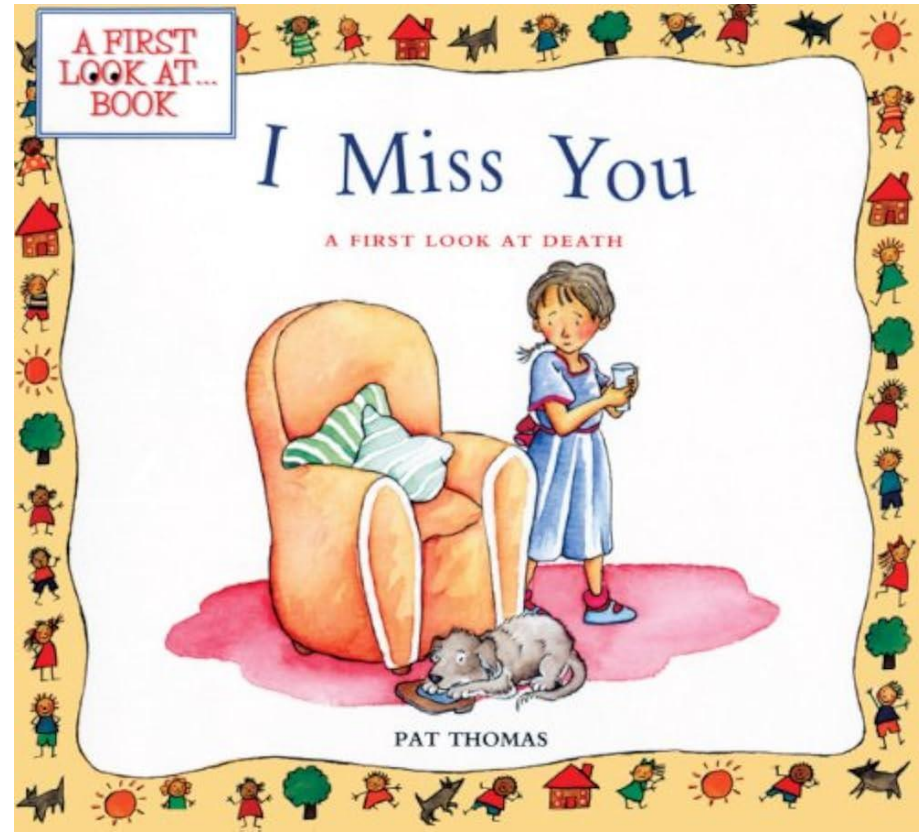
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RESOURCES



GRIEF

PSYCHOEDUCATION





Have you dreamt about a special person?

How do you show others that you care about them?

Who was your special person important to you?

Do you ever think about who you miss after they die?

What is grief?

Say three things about your special person.

Finish this sentence: 'I wish...'

Why do people die?

The Grief Game

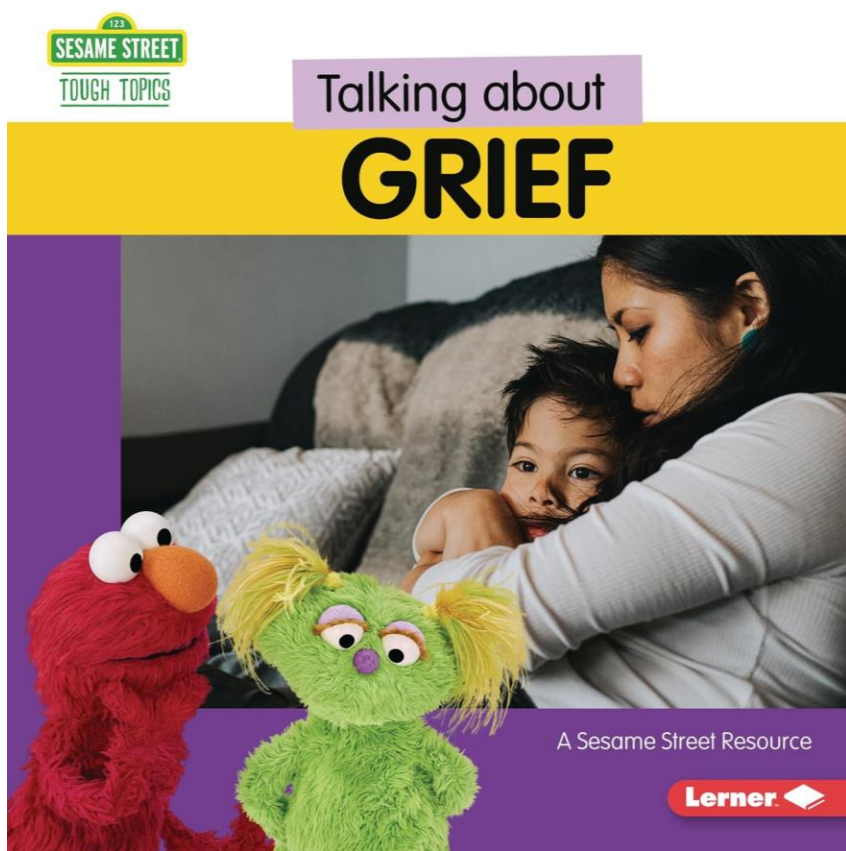
Yvonne Searle and Isabelle Streng

An engaging and sensitive board game for two to six players





Nelson's Journey

Bringing back smiles to bereaved children



123 SESAME STREET TOUGH TOPICS

Talking about **GRIEF**



A Sesame Street Resource

Lerner




123 SESAME STREET

Military for Families

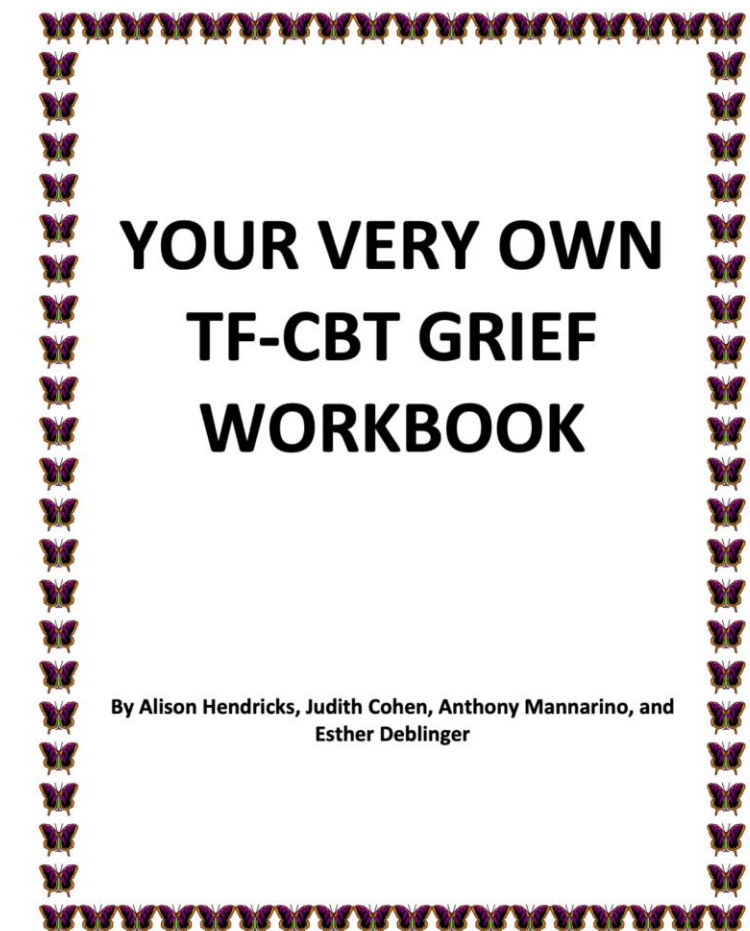
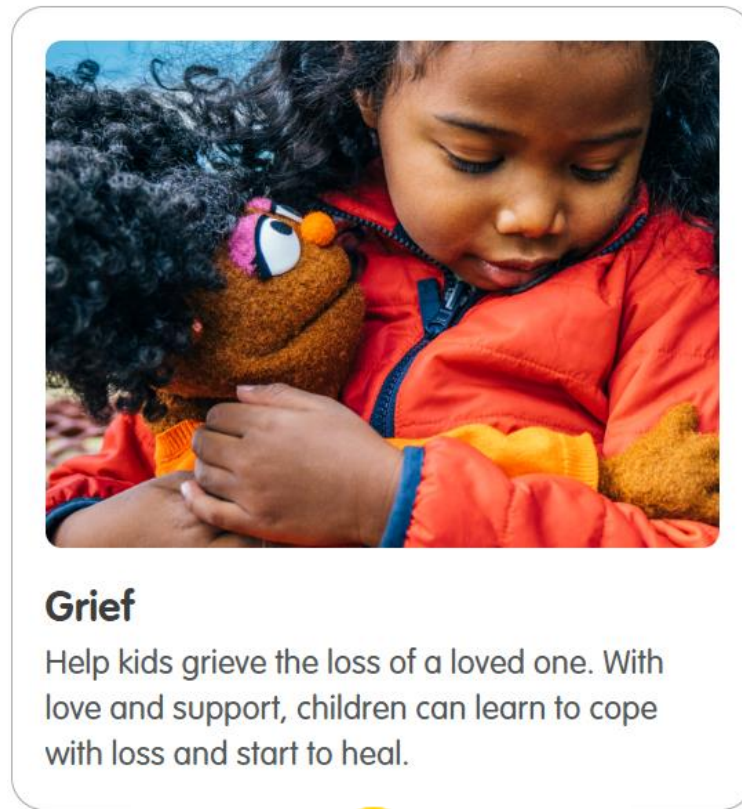
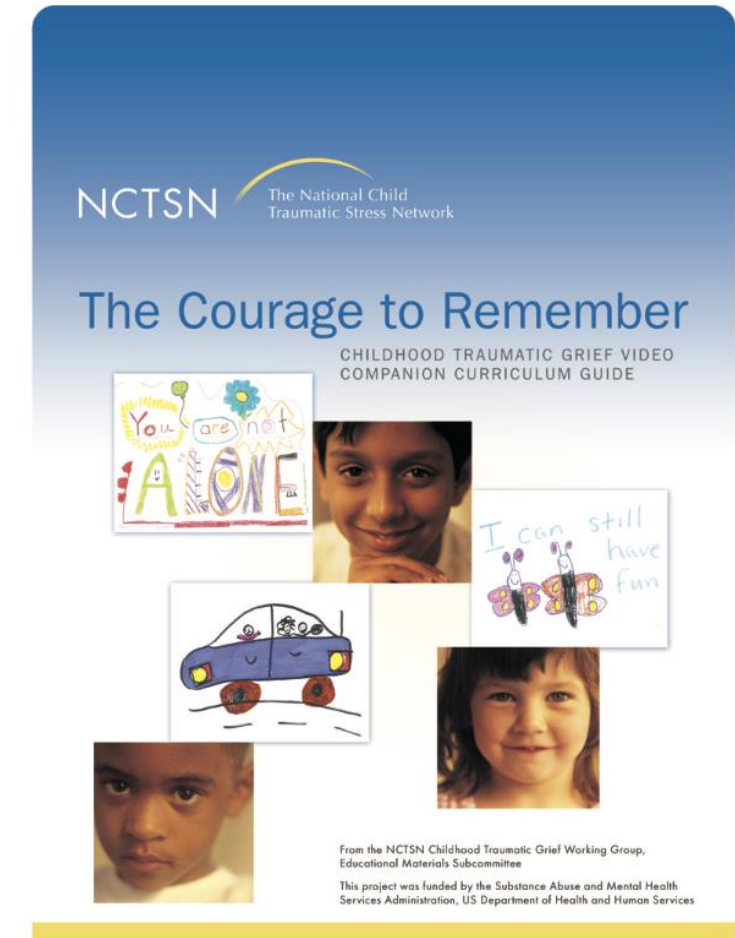
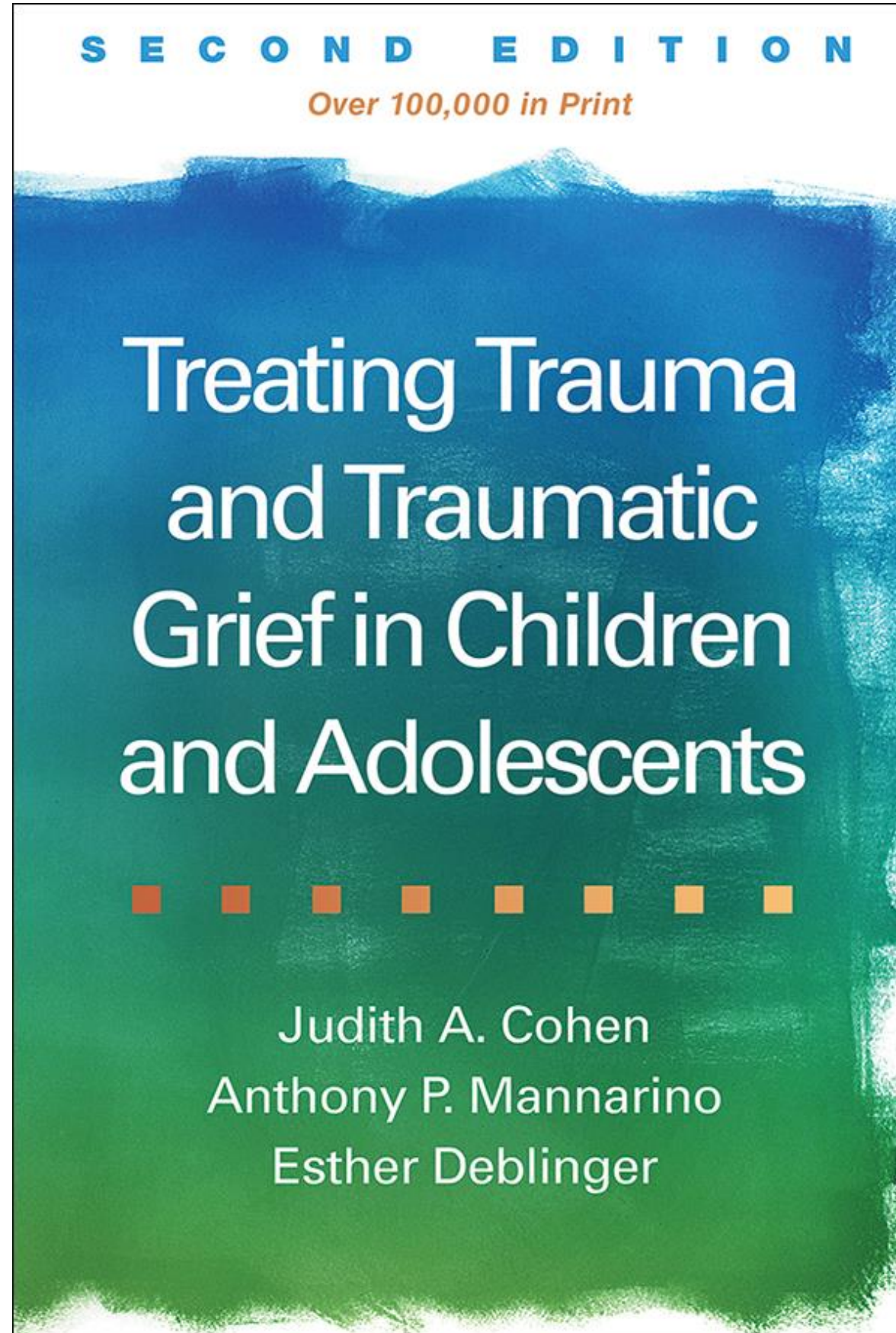
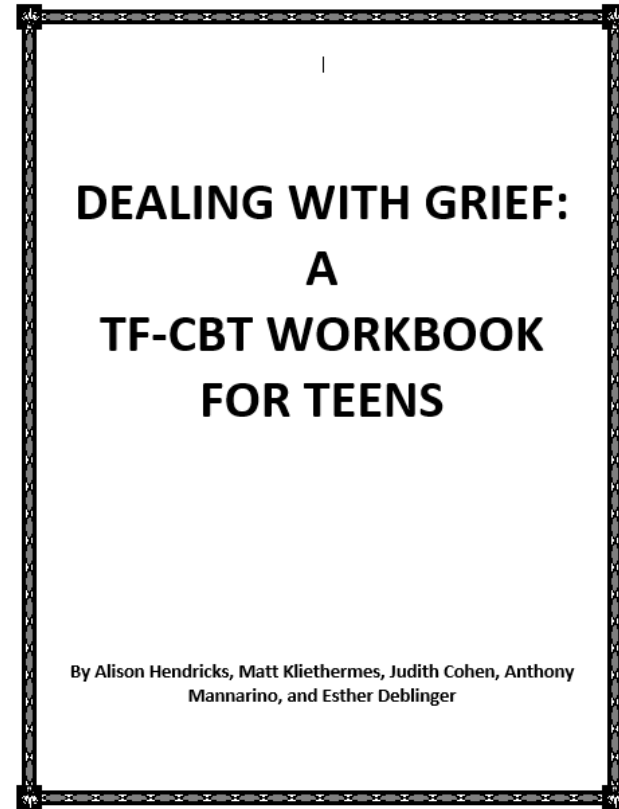


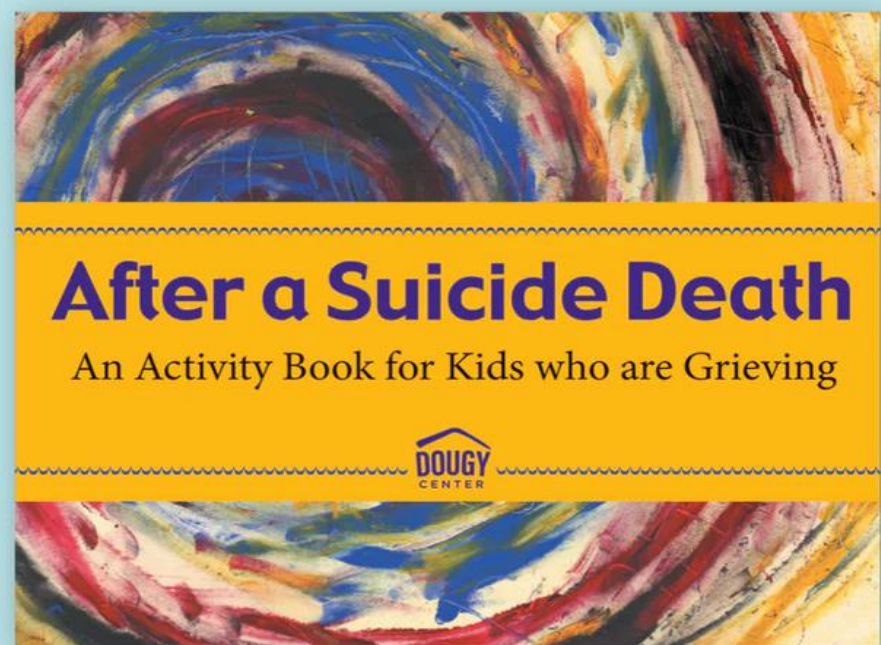

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES







THANK YOU!

CONTACT INFORMATION

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