



of Citrus  
and the Nature Coast  
[www.friendsofcitrus.org](http://www.friendsofcitrus.org)

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## Friends of Citrus and the Nature Coast

is a charitable organization providing community grief support workshops for anyone who has experienced a loss; telephone support; grief support resources for all ages; educational materials for parents and teachers; wellness support programs; and children's grief support camps.

Social support for widows and widowers is provided through the **L.I.F.T. Program**, sponsored by Dignity Memorial in Citrus County.

**Herry's Kids Children's Services** programs include **Camp Good Hope** and **Teen Encounter** grief support camps, which provide an honest, safe environment where kids can learn to talk openly about their loss and improve their ability to cope.

### VISION:

To be a grief resource for people of all ages and stages of life.

### MISSION:

To provide help, hope and healing to people in grief.

### Grief

*is the normal and natural response to losing someone or something.*

**Memorial opportunities** include the annual **Tree of Remembrance**, **Renewal Memorial Services**, memorial stones, plaques, Veteran's recognition and **Tree of Loving Memory** leaves.

All of the programs and services offered by Friends of Citrus and the Nature Coast are totally dependent on donations, fundraising and Thrift & Gift Shoppe operations.

For information about services or to donate, call **352.249.1470**

or visit [www.friendsofcitrus.org](http://www.friendsofcitrus.org)  
or **Friends of Citrus** on Facebook.

Friends of Citrus and the Nature Coast, Inc. Registration No. CH1413  
A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE (800-435-7352) WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.



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**Herry  
the  
Heron**



"Herry the Heron" is the logo for Friends of Citrus and the Nature Coast. The heron is symbolic of calm, grace, solitude, patience, versatility, tranquility, intelligence, determination, independence and resourcefulness.  
Herry carries a message that says *we cannot always do everything by ourselves. There are times in everybody's life in which we gotta "get a little help from our friends."*

09/20/21

# Helping Children Cope With Loss

Tips and resources for  
teachers, parents  
and other caregivers  
to support children  
who have experienced a loss



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# A Child's Concept of Death and Grief Based on Age

## Infancy to Age 2

Babies do not have a cognitive capability to understand death and loss but do react to disruptions in their nurturing environment, including someone who is no longer around. Reactions include irritability and protest, constant crying, and changes in sleeping and eating habits.

## Preschool Age 2 - 4

For this age group, everything is temporary and reversible, similar to "peek-a-boo" where things disappear and reappear. They do not understand "forever," and will repeatedly ask where the person has gone and may search for the person. They respond to emotional reactions of adults in their life and react to separations and altered patterns of care.

## Early Childhood Age 4 - 7

*It's my fault. I was mad or bad and they died. In the cartoons someone always comes back to life, this person will too.* Death is temporary and reversible to this age group, so they continue to search for the deceased and ask questions. It is best to encourage children to answer their own questions and express feelings through play using drawing, dolls and action figures. Sometimes this group will act as if nothing has happened. They may play act death or a funeral.

## Middle Years Age 7 - 10

This group is very curious about the details and may ask candid questions: *Do your fingernails and hair grow after you die? Where do dead people go?* Sometimes death becomes tangible like a ghost or boogeyman. This group may become overly concerned about themselves or others. They may become angry or sad and experience difficulties at school. They may take on mannerisms of the deceased or take on tasks performed by the deceased. It is best to encourage games as a way to express feelings.

## Pre-Adolescent Age 10 - 12

This group is in the process of decreasing dependence of parents and adults and increasing dependence on their peer group. They want to know the biological and emotional process of death and cover up their feelings so as not to appear "different" to their peer group. They may appear removed and exhibit feelings through physical complaints, moodiness, indifference and isolation.

## Teens Age 13 - 18

Adolescent grief can be impacted by the relationship with the individual, how the individual died, their support system, past experiences with death, and their own unique strengths and weaknesses when it comes to dealing with stress, adversity and high emotion. A wide range of responses is considered "normal" and there's no one formula for providing support. Support them, talk openly and honestly, listen and allow them to grieve as they want.

## How to Help a Child Cope with Loss

- 1. Encourage children to ask questions:** Respond with "What do you think?" and be a good listener.
- 2. All children are different:** Don't assume that every child in a certain age group understands death in the same way or with the same feelings.
- 3. Grief is not predictable:** Allow adequate time for the child to work through the grief process.
- 4. Don't lie or tell half-truths:** Children will see through false information.
- 5. Give the child information about loss and death at their level:** Allow the child to guide as they need more information.

## Caregiver Resources

Deaton, R.L. & Berkan, W.A. (1995). *Planning and managing death issues in the schools: A handbook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Mister Rogers Website: [www.mister-rogers.org](http://www.mister-rogers.org) (see booklet on Grieving for children 4-10 years)

Webb, N.B. (1993). *Helping bereaved children: A handbook for practitioners*. New York: Guilford Press.

Wolfelt, A. (1983). *Helping children cope with grief*. Bristol, PA: Accelerated Development.

Wolfelt, A. (1997). *Healing the bereaved child: Grief gardening, growth through grief and other touchstones for caregivers*. Ft. Collins, CO: Companion.

Worden, J.W. (1996). *Children and grief: When a parent dies*. New York: Guilford Press

Helping Children Cope With Death, The Dougy Center for Grieving Children, [www.dougy.org](http://www.dougy.org).

## Resources for Children

Gootman, M.E. (1994). *When a friend dies: A book for teens about grieving and healing*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing.

Greenlee, S. (1992). *When someone dies*. Atlanta: Peachtree Publishing. (Ages 9-12).

Wolfelt, A. (2001). *Healing your grieving heart for kids*. Ft. Collins, CO: Companion. (See also similar titles for teens and adults)