

# Grief, trauma, and COVID-19: information for parents



Children went through a lot of change and stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moving to online school in the beginning of the pandemic left lots of kids feeling isolated, while missing out on big life events like birthdays and graduations was distressing for many. Losing loved ones was traumatic for whole families.

## → What are common symptoms of grief?

You may notice signs such as:

- Getting angry more easily than normal
- Trouble sleeping
- Having a hard time paying attention in school or at home
- Worsening grades
- Feelings of fear about the safety of themselves or others
- Risky behaviors like using drugs or alcohol



Your child may be dealing with trauma or grief even though it seems like life is “back to normal”.

Not all children or teens react to grief or stress the same way. You know your kids best - if you feel like something is off, talk to them.

## → Things have returned to normal - is my child really stressed about the pandemic?

Maybe. Past traumatic or stressful events can affect young people months or years later. Kids may need help to understand the changes that happened during the pandemic and process the feelings they had. Your child may have a higher chance of having post-traumatic stress if they have gone through other stressful events in their lives like a divorce or death of a loved one.

## → How can I help my child if they are dealing with grief or trauma?

- Let your child talk when they are ready- don't force them to talk if they don't want to
- Open up the conversation with questions or comments like “How do you feel about” what's happening in the world?” or “Let me know if you want to talk.”
- Listen carefully and ask questions in a non-judgmental way.
- Reassure your child and let them know that you're there for them and that they can ask you questions any time.
- Practice calming and coping strategies with your child.
  - Model healthy coping strategies for your child. For example, let them see you take big, deep breaths when you are overwhelmed.
  - Let your child talk or express thoughts or feelings in creative ways, such as drawing or singing.

- Answer questions and share facts in a way that your child can understand. Use age appropriate words and be honest.
- Find a counselor or therapist who is trained to treat childhood trauma and grief issues. If you're not sure where to start, call your child's doctor.



## What resources are out there?

Resources for young children (0-5):

- **Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame Street:**  
<https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/activities/breathe-think-do/>
  - A resource to help parents to work through big feelings with their child.
- **Tools for supporting emotional wellness for younger children and their parents:**  
<https://nap.nationalacademies.org/resource/other/dbase/wellbeing-tools/interactive/tools-for-children.html>




Resources for older children and teens:

- **Tools for supporting emotional wellness for youth and teens:**  
<https://nap.nationalacademies.org/resource/other/dbase/wellbeing-tools/interactive/tools-for-teens.html>
- **Apps to lower stress and anxiety:**
  - Moodfit: Mental Health Fitness  
<https://www.getmoodfit.com/>
  - Calm: App for meditation  
<https://www.calm.com/>
  - MindShift CBT: evidence-based anxiety relief  
<https://kidshelpline.com.au/tools/apps/mindshift-cbt-anxiety-relief>



Visit our website to find out if you can get a COVID-19 vaccine at no cost through CDC's Bridge Access Program.

 [bit.ly/3QMEI8B](https://bit.ly/3QMEI8B)