



# Kids and Loss:

## *How to Work with the Uniqueness of a Child's Grief*

Erica H. Serrine, Ph.D., LCSW, FT

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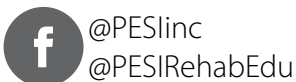
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## ***How to Work with the Uniqueness of a Child's Grief***

**Erica H. Serrine, Ph.D., LCSW, FT**



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## MATERIALS PROVIDED BY

**Erica H. Sirrine, Ph.D., LCSW, FT, is a licensed clinical social worker, qualified clinical supervisor and the dean of the School of Social Work at Southeastern University. She has over 17 years of experience in the field of death, dying and bereavement and has been awarded the distinction of Fellow in Thanatology by the Association for Death Education and Counseling. She has conducted and published research on the continuing bonds maintained by survivors following a death, and she recently authored and published *Sammy's Story*, an anticipatory grief counseling book for young children experiencing the serious illness of a loved one.**

**Dr. Sirrine has extensive expertise providing individual and group therapy to bereaved children, adolescents, adults and families. She has implemented numerous interventions and programs aimed at improving the emotional health of clients experiencing loss. Dr. Sirrine presents seminars on bereavement and loss throughout the United States and is known for her interactive and engaging workshops. She has been distinguished as "Professor of the Year" and the National Association of Social Workers Heartland, Florida Unit's "Social Worker of the Year."**

### **Speaker Disclosure:**

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*Materials that are included in this course may include interventions and modalities that are beyond the authorized practice of mental health professionals. As a licensed professional, you are responsible for reviewing the scope of practice, including activities that are defined in law as beyond the boundaries of practice in accordance with and in compliance with your professions standards.*

# Grief Summit 2021: Supporting Grieving Children & Adolescents

Dr. Erica Surrine, Ph.D., LCSW, FT  
[www.hopeandgrief.com](http://www.hopeandgrief.com)

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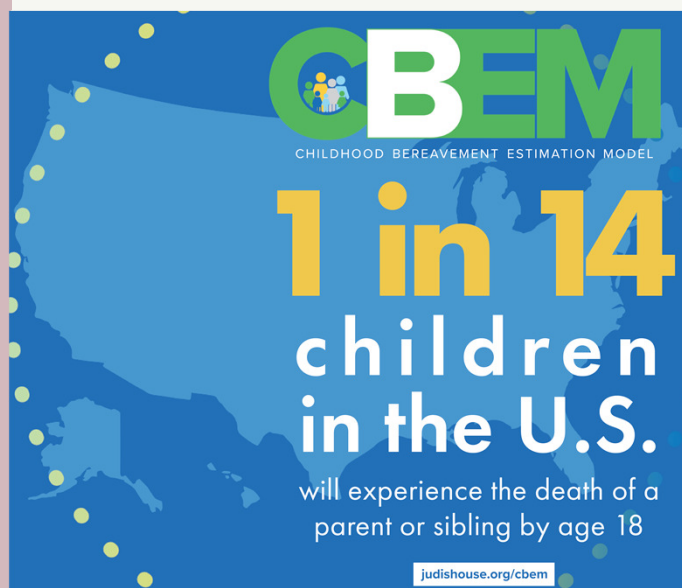
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# Parental and Sibling Loss

Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model  
[judishouse.org](http://judishouse.org)



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## Childhood Bereavement

### Resources

National Alliance for Grieving Children

<https://childrengrieve.org>

Dougy Center- The National Center for Grieving Children and Families

<https://www.dougy.org>

Judi's House/JAG Institute

<https://judishouse.org>

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## Non-Death Losses and Children

Divorce

Parental Separation

Parental Incarceration

Adoption

Foster Care/Termination of Parental Rights

Move/Relocation

Military Deployment

Peer Group/Friendship Changes

Social Status Changes

School Change

Parental Unemployment

Illness

Parental Substance Use/Mental Illness

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## Grief vs. Mourning

### A Distinction

Grief

“Deep sorrow”

Mourning

“The (outward) expression of deep sorrow”

“The act of sorrowing”

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# “Getting Over It” vs. Reconciliation

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## Core Tenets and Principles of Grief-Informed Practice

Dougy Center (Schuurman & Mitchell, 2020)

Natural	Personal Empowerment & Agency
Nonpathological & Complex	Safety
Contextual	Person-Centered
Disruptive	Dynamic
Relational Connection & Perceived Support	Non-Finite

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# Distinctions

## Between Adult and Youth Responses to Loss

"Forgotten Mourners"

Impacted by Cognitive Development

Impacted by Adults (and how those adults allow or avoid emotions)

Use of Play to Cope (Actions vs. Words)- "Decoding" Behavior

Peer Relationships/Social Status Changes

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# Cognitive Components

## Of Understanding Death in Childhood

Universality

Irreversibility

Nonfunctionality

Causality

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# Grief Emotions

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## Common Grief Reactions

Regressive Behaviors

Magical Thinking

Disbelief/Confusion

Difficulty Concentrating

Change in school work/grades

Sadness/Depression

Mood Changes

Anger/Protest

Acting out/Aggressive behavior

Guilt/Regret

Fear/Anxiety

Faith/Spirituality Questions

Isolation/Loneliness

“Grief Bursts”

Physical Symptoms (tummy/headaches, etc.)

Sleep Problems/Disturbances

Lethargy/Fatigue

Continuing Bonds/Mystical Experiences

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“Things We Want Adults to  
Know about our Grief”

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School-Based and Support  
Group Bereavement  
Interventions

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## Considerations for School-Based Counseling

Parental Permission

Relationships with Constituents

Maintaining Confidentiality

Counseling location, student comfort level, staff questions- Case Example: "High School"

Parental Communication and Follow-Up

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## Support Group Considerations

Structure

Open vs. Closed

Duration/Frequency of Meetings

Facilitators- Therapists vs. Trained Peer Volunteers

Number of Participants

Adult, Youth, or Youth and Parent/Caregiver

Pre-Screening

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# Family Bereavement Program

## Evidence-Based, Family Support Group Intervention

Developed for parentally-bereaved youth and caregivers (Ayers et al., Sandler et al.).

Focuses on reducing risk factors and strengthening protective factors

Youth and Caregiver Program

Child (ages 8-12)

Adolescent (ages 12-16)

12 group sessions (2 hours each)

Focuses on psychoeducation, coping, and caregiver skills

Training manuals available for youth and caregiver groups (Ayers et al.)

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# Pathfinders Program- Judi's House

## Newly Developed (Evidence-Informed)

Developed at Judi's House (Griese, Burns, & Farro, 2018)

Combines elements of evidence based treatments including the FBP, TF-CBT, and GTI with peer grief support group approaches

Acknowledges that grief is uniquely experienced by each person

Avoids minimizing or pathologizing

Strengths-based

Focuses on "decreasing disruptive grief reactions" while "increasing restorative grief experiences"

10 sessions (three phases), 50-90 minutes in length

Three curricula- Children (3-11 years), Adolescents (12-18 years), Adults

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# General Grief Support Group

## Weekly Session Topic Outline

My Loss Story (Death/Grief Narrative)

Coping With and Expressing Feelings of Loss (Anger)

Seeking Support after Loss

Coping with Changes Caused by the Loss (Good and Bad Changes)

Self Care following Loss

Remembering the Loss/Sharing Memories (Positive and Negative)

Honoring the Loss/Memorializing (Continuing Bonds)

Final Group/Meal Sharing/Strengths-Based

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"If ever there is a tomorrow when we're not together.. there is something you must always remember. You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think. But the most important thing is, even if we're apart...I'll always be with you."

- Winnie the Pooh

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Questions?  
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## Online Resources

[www.bosplace.org](http://www.bosplace.org)

<http://childrengrieve.org/>

[www.dougy.org](http://www.dougy.org)

<https://judishouse.org>

<https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/grief/>

**Grief Summit 2021- References**  
**Erica Serrine**

**Supporting Grieving Children and Adolescents**

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