

Grief Support and Empathetic Language to Help School Communities

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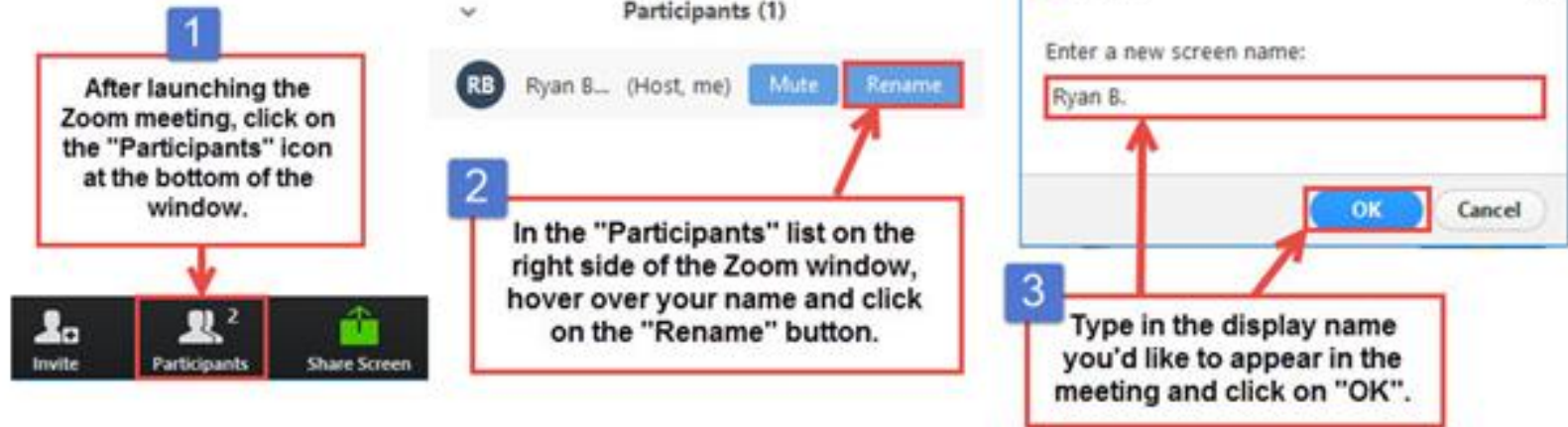
May 5th 1:00-2:00 (EST)

Please share your city in the chat!

Zoom Norms

- Please remain *muted* to minimize background noise and unmute yourself when speaking and or prompted for participation
- Update your profile name to include the following: Name, Organization and School (**Jacques, ExpandedED/PS 123**)
- Have a question ???- you can raise your hand on the group chat!
- If you have any questions, feel free to add them into this Zoom Group Chat. The program excellence team will be overseeing the chat during the convening.
- Presentation will be recorded.

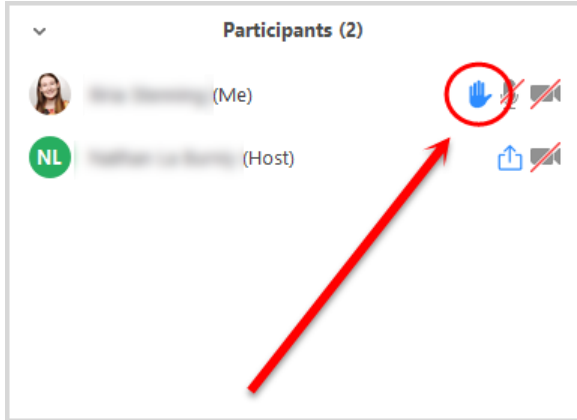
Updating Your Name on Zoom



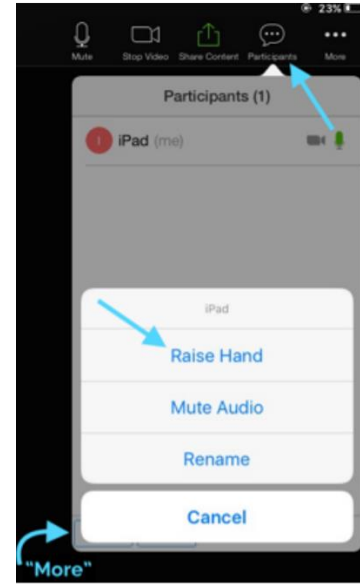
How to Raise your Hand On Zoom

Click on participants

On computer



Click on participants
on tablet or phone



Agenda

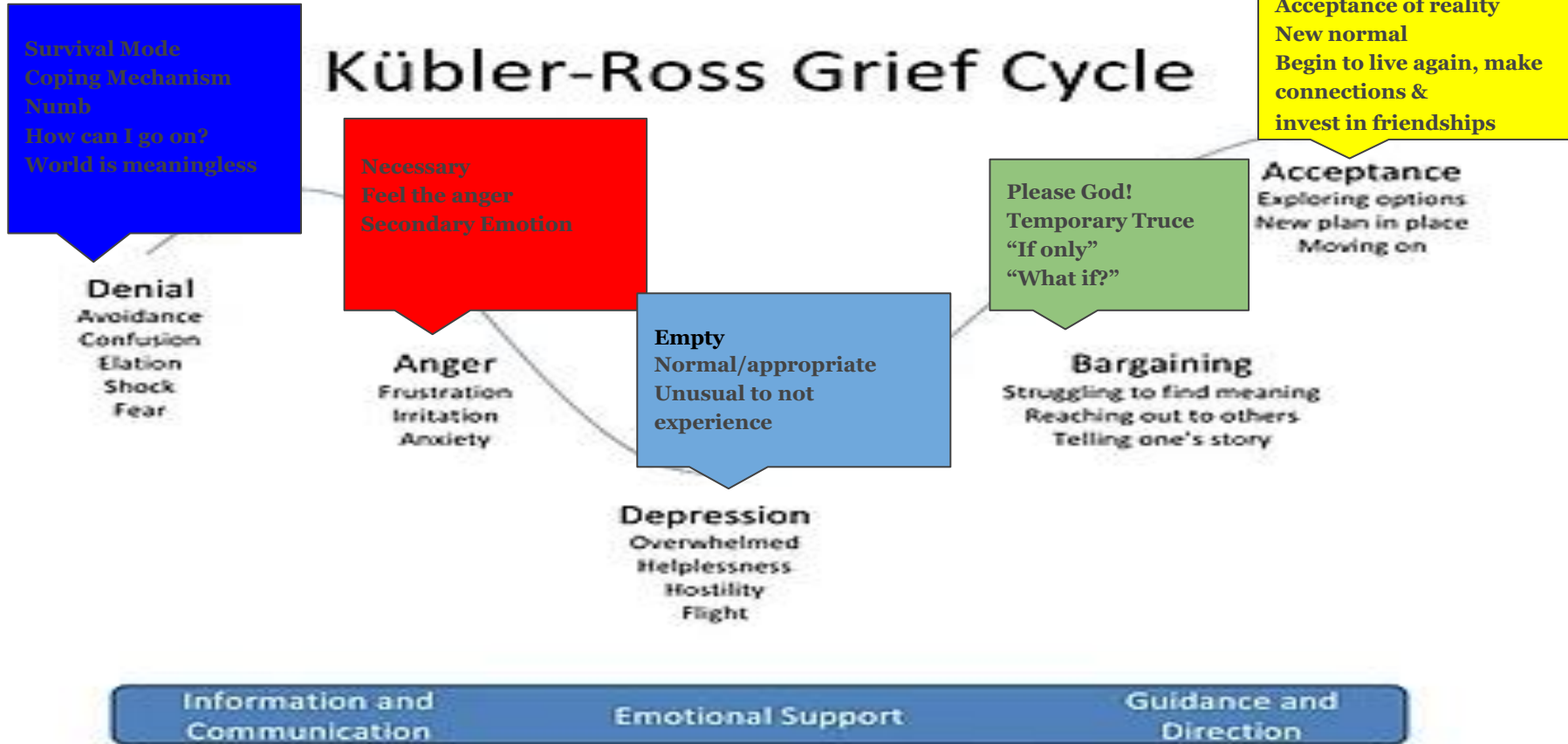
- Welcome (Enter your city in the chat)
- Zoom Norms
- Grief Webinar Presentation
- Q & A
- Survey

Sabrina G. Fernandez, LMSW, M.Ed



- Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies (City College)
- Master's degree in the field of social work (Columbia University)
- Master's degree in Educational Leadership (Fordham University)
- Employed with NYC Department of Education since 2006 as a payroll secretary and transitioned to social work in 2015.
- Middle School Social Worker, SEL Coordinator, and supervisor of social work graduate students at P.S. 84.
- Working towards Social Work clinical license as an evaluator and therapist at JCCA (conduct evaluations for children ages 0-21 to determine eligibility for therapeutic services).
- Previous experience as a psychotherapist for individuals of all ages, domestic violence survivors, and children in the foster care system.
- Facilitated Cognitive Behavior Therapy courses at Metropolitan Correctional Center

Kübler-Ross Grief Cycle



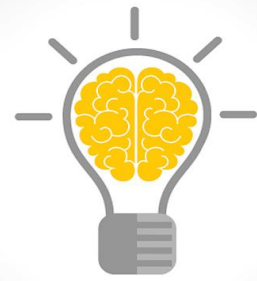
Understanding Death: preschool children, school-age children and teens

Preschool children - often have a hard time understanding the concept of death and its permanence. Sometimes they need clarity that the person is no longer sleeping, eating, feeling or living anymore. *Avoid adult language* that confuses this concept such as “the person passed away” or euphemisms for sleep such as “they are resting in peace” or explanations such as “the person went away” as these are potentially more confusing. Sometimes using children’s books to explain the concept of death.

School-age children - understand that death is permanent, *but they do not understand how to explain the causes of death* and often mistaken death for fictional characters such as monsters. Young children may also take the blame for death which is again a misunderstanding of how people die. *They also tend to become fearful that other people who are close to them will die. Young children need reassurance.*

Teens - understand the concept of death but may grapple with larger questions of purpose, meaning of life and can lose a sense of security. Some may consider questioning their life plans and find it difficult to maintain regular routines. *It’s common for young people to experience the range of emotions and phases of grief that adults do, and will need support expressing themselves.*

Keep in Mind



- Proactively reach out to the griever; acknowledge their loss and speak with the individual if you feel capable. If not, refer them to a mental health professional on your team or the person he/she is most comfortable talking about.
- Create a safe and trusting space.
- Do open the door to speak with those grieving.
- Do not assume that everyone who has been through the emergency is traumatized.
- Do not make assumptions about what students and staff have experienced during the incident or are currently experiencing. People vary in their experiences with grief.
- Do not assume that all students and staff members want or need to talk to you. Being physically present in a supportive and calm way helps people cope.
- Do not “debrief” by asking for details of what happened.
- If you cannot answer a question, say so and then follow up to learn the facts.
- Do not patronize students by focusing on the individual’s weaknesses, helplessness, disability, etc. Focus instead on what the individual has done to contribute to their well-being and to others.
- Many student reactions to grief are acute and understandable. Do not pathologize by using terms like “symptoms” or “conditions” or “disorder”.

LANGUAGE MATTERS.

YOUR WORDS HAVE POWER

If a Child Says. . .

Don't Say This!

Say This Instead!

My ____ just died. . . “

“I don't know how I feel”

“I don't feel like I have anything to live for now that he/she is no longer alive”

“I have so many memories. I miss him/her so much”

“I didn't get to say goodbye”

“I know just what you're going through.”

“You must be/feel incredibly angry.”

“ This is hard. But it's important to remember the good things in life, too.”

“At least he's no longer in pain.”

“I lost both my parents when I was your age.”

“I'm sorry for your loss; do you want to talk about it more?”

“Can you tell me more about what this has been like for You?”

“Most people have strong feelings when something like this happens to them. What has this been like for you?”

“What kinds of memories do you have about the person who died?”

“What sorts of things have you been thinking about since your loved one died?”

[What Not to Say](#)

[Coalition to Support Grieving Students](#)



Teacher Dos & Don'ts on Feelings

DO continue to acknowledge student feelings throughout this and subsequent lessons/activities. **DO:**

- **Normalize their feelings, e.g. “we all feel sad or lonely sometimes” or “I hear Racquel when she talks of feeling frustrated.”** This can reduce stigma and reinforces that feelings are human and okay.
- **Name student feelings, e.g. “so several of us feel confused right now” and “I’m noticing feelings of anxiety.”** By naming our strong feelings, we can hit the pause button. And rather than having the feelings overwhelm us and take over, naming them can help our students take a step back and regain control. Clinical professor of psychiatry Dan Siegel refers to this approach as “naming to tame it.”
- **Name the feelings, don’t label the person, e.g. “I feel frustrated” instead of “I am frustrated” or “Racquel sounds like she feels sad” instead of “Racquel is sad.”** This allows us to be more than our feelings and reminds us that, with time and support, we can move through and past them.

DON’T try to fix or sugarcoat things. Don’t tell students things like, “don’t be sad, this will all be over soon” or “it’s not that bad.” Let students have their feelings. Listening, being present, naming, and normalizing student feelings can help them process and move through and past their feelings.



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How do I lead **MYSELF**,
staff and the school community
through COVID-19?



STARTS WITH ME!

Acknowledge suffering

Self-awareness

Mindfulness

Compassion for self

Self-care

Think "TODAY"

Focus on the Positive

Get Grounded

Prioritize and Focus

Relish in discomfort - it breeds growth

Staff & School Community

Acknowledge suffering

Stay Present

Be present, visible, and available

Compassion

Empathy

Authenticity

Strengths-based perspective

Stay "in the know"

Breathe!

Maintain Relationships

Seek **Order** rather than **Control**

Ask "how can I be useful?"

— Transparency is key

Model the behavior you want to see

Supporting Others through Anxiety

what if?

What if I get it?

What if you die next?

What if I die?

What if?

1. **Self-regulation** - the ability to process and manage our own emotions and behaviors in a healthy way. Children must be taught how to self-regulate while adults can practice reassuring themselves. This takes **time**, **practice** and **space to learn**.
1. **Don't fear fears** - Fears can be an inescapable part of being a human being and can present differently in children and adults. **Address your own anxiety before addressing in others**. Although we want to save the day and make it less difficult, in the long run will cause more challenges in others learning how to calm themselves down.
1. **Validate feelings** - For example, instead of "Oh come on, that wasn't scary!" or "What is there to be afraid of?" try, "Wow, that does sound scary!" or, "I know a lot of kids/people worry about that."
1. **Make a plan** - Help the child/person set reasonable goals. Once you've set the goal, talk through the steps you'll take to reach it, and be patient.
1. **Offer encouragement, and be patient**. Remember that change takes time, and fear is a very powerful feeling. Stay consistent and praise the individual; for example: "I thought it was really brave of you to . . . Let's see if we . . . tomorrow!" or simply things like, "You've got this!" or, "You're being so brave!"

“But, I’m not a trained mental health professional, how can I help?”

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Sometimes the best thing you can do is **focus on the things you can control to get through your day**. Don’t worry too much about six months from now. Pay attention to what you can do during each small moment.

Maintain Normalcy

Stay Calm

Stay focused

Prepare well enough emotionally and logistically

Allow the affected person to voluntarily share their thoughts or tell their story.

Keep routines in place

Be creative about new activities

Exercise

Limit consumption of news

Stay in touch virtually

Keep it positive

Try to maintain your hobbies and interests



If there is an imminent threat of danger to a child's health or safety or child requires immediate medical attention, staff members must contact 911.

Assessing Child Safety during the COVID-19 pandemic

Ways to assess child safety:

Initiate contact by calling the family

Use of Skype, Facetime, videoconferencing or other technological means to obtain a visual of the child/situation

Examples of educational neglect:

1. the parent is aware or should have been aware of the lack of participation in remote learning (i.e., absences);
2. the parent is contributing to the absences or is failing to take steps to effectively address the problem and return the child to school remote learning (i.e., failure to provide a minimum degree of care);
3. the absences are impairing the student's education; and
4. the school has exhausted timely outreach efforts and intervention services (phone calls, letters, remote conferences, remote counseling services, referrals, preventive services).

Before we call in a report to the SCR, school staff **MUST** make every effort to confirm that lack of access to technology is not the primary reason for a child's failure to participate in remote learning.

Resources

Middle School

A Lesson on Feelings & Language: <https://www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/covid-crisis-lesson-feelings-and-language-ms-and-hs>

Addressing Change and Loss: <https://www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/addressing-change-loss-middle-school-high-school>

Are You Leading Through the Crisis ... or Managing the Response? <https://hbr.org/2020/03/are-you-leading-through-the-crisis-or-managing-the-response>

How to Lead Through a Crisis: <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/how-to-lead-through-a-crisis/>

5 Stages of Grief: <https://grief.com/the-five-stages-of-grief/>

Navya Singh, PsyD: Maintaining Normalcy During the Coronavirus Crisis: <https://www.mdmag.com/medical-news/singh-normalcy-coronavirus-crisis>

Supporting Kids During the Coronavirus Crisis: <https://childmind.org/article/supporting-kids-during-the-covid-19-crisis/>

Coronavirus Anxiety: Coping with Stress, Fear, and Worry: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/anxiety/coronavirus-anxiety.htm>

New York City Outward Bound Schools: <https://www.nycoutwardbound.org/>

New York City Outward Bound Schools Grief Resources: https://www.nycoutwardbound.org/resources-covid-19-response/resources-for-staff-teachers/grief-resources-for-schools/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=button_grief&utm_campaign=educator_2

Minding your Mind: <https://mindingyourmind.org/online/>

National Alliance for Grieving Children: <https://childrengrieve.org/education/online-learning>

Video Resources

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Providing Support Over Time: <https://vimeo.com/394110516>

Talk with Children: <https://vimeo.com/394111025>

What Not to Say: <https://vimeo.com/394110868>

The Grieving Process: Coping with Death: <https://youtu.be/gsYL4PC0hyk>

Feeling Anxious and Worried ?



NYPCC is open !!!

We are here for you and your family

- Can't leave your home? Phone sessions with a Therapist are available.
- Open 7 days a week. Convenient evening and weekend appointments.
- Call us today. We are mindful of "Social Distancing".

NYPCC Child & Family Mental Health Centers

Bronx

579 Courtlandt Ave, Bronx, NY (718) 485-2100

CMBronx@nypcc.org

Bushwick

102 Pilling Street, Brooklyn, NY (718) 602-1000

CMBushwick@nypcc.org

East NY

2857 Linden Boulevard, Brooklyn, NY (718) 235-3100

CMLinden@nypcc.org

**Have you had a loved one
die of COVID19?**

**Do you need help understanding
this sudden and traumatic loss ?**

**Let us provide
emotional support
while you grieve.**

This group is FREE.

**It takes place online from
1:00 - 2:30PM on Thursdays.**

**This group is facilitated by
Maria Georgopoulos,
Director of Bereavement Services
at Calvary Hospital.**



GriefShare groups are now meeting online. Find a group in your area today! ✖

It hurts to lose someone. Find help at GriefShare.

GriefShare is a friendly, caring group of people who will walk alongside you through one of life's most difficult experiences. You don't have to go through the grieving process alone.

Find a GriefShare support group or event near you

Thousands of GriefShare support groups meet weekly around the world. Visit or join a group at anytime. And attend as many meetings as you like.

[Find a group](#)

"It has gotten me through the **hardest time of my life.**"

[Read more testimonials >](#)

How GriefShare works

GriefShare seminars and support groups are led by people who understand what you are going through and want to help. You'll gain access to valuable GriefShare resources to help you recover from your loss and look forward to rebuilding your life.

There are thousands of GriefShare grief recovery support groups meeting throughout the US, Canada, and in over 10 other countries. There's one meeting near you!

Free daily email encouragement

Receive an encouraging email message every day for a year. These short messages will inspire you and provide practical information as you grieve the loss of your loved one. [Sign up for the GriefShare daily emails.](#)

"Helped me simply get through each day."



QUESTIONS?

Grief Support Post-Webinar Survey

Thank you for attending today's webinar, "Grief Support and Empathetic Language to Help School Communities". Please complete the short survey below. All of your responses will remain confidential.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/grief-webinar>

**Click survey
link in chat
box.**

